

Advance Directives for Patients 18 and Older



Have a voice in your future medical care. Share your wishes with your loved ones and your health care team.

You have the right to fill out a form known as an Advance Directive. The form explains in advance how you would want to be cared for if a serious medical condition arises that would prevent you from telling your doctor how you want to be treated. For example, if you were brought to a healthcare facility in a coma, what would you want the facility's staff to know as decisions are made regarding your care?

What is an Advance Directive?

An Advance Directive is a written or oral statement that is made and witnessed in advance of serious illness or injury, stating how you want medical decisions made. There are different types of advance directives, including:

- A "living will" and
- Healthcare surrogate designation

An Advance Directive allows you to express your decisions about your healthcare or to name someone to make those decisions for you, if you become unable to make decisions about your own medical treatment.

What is a Living Will?

A living will generally states the kind of medical care you want or do not want if you become unable to make your own decisions.

It is called a "living will" because it takes effect while you are still living. Florida law provides a suggested form for a living will. You may use this form or other living will models. A form designed by Nicklaus Children's Hospital is available to you. You may wish to speak to an attorney or physician to be certain you have completed the living will in a way that your wishes will be understood.

What is a Healthcare Surrogate Designation?

A healthcare surrogate designation is a signed, dated and witnessed document naming another person such as parent, friend, husband, wife

or close friend as your agent to make medical decisions for you, if you become unable to make them for yourself. You can include instructions about any treatment you want or wish to avoid. Florida law provides a suggested form for designation of a healthcare surrogate. You may use it or some other form, such as one available to you at Nicklaus Children's Hospital. You may wish to name a second person to represent you, in case your first designee is not available.

Which is Better?

You may wish to have both a living will and a healthcare surrogate designation, or combine them into a single document that describes treatment choices in a variety of situations, and names someone to make decisions for you should you be unable to make decisions for yourself.

Why Should I Complete an Advance Directive?

Advance directives can protect people who are very ill and unable to communicate. They can help give you control over your control over your health care. They also relieve loved ones of the burden of guessing what you would want to do.

Do I Have to Write an Advance Directive under Florida Law?

No, there is no legal requirement to complete an Advance Directive. However, if you have not made an Advance Directive or designated a healthcare surrogate, care decisions may be made for you by your court-appointed guardian, your parent, adult sibling, spouse, adult relative or close friend. This person should be called a proxy.

Can I Change My Mind After I write a Living Will or Designate a Healthcare Surrogate?

Yes, you may change or cancel these documents at any time. It is important that you review the documents regularly to make sure that they clearly reflect your current thoughts and wishes. Any changes should be written, signed and dated. You can also change an Advance Directive by oral statement.

What If I Have Filled Out An Advance Directive In Another State and Treatment in a Healthcare Facility In Florida?

An Advance Directive completed in another state, in compliance with the other state's law, can be honored in Florida.

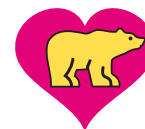
What Should I Do With My Advance Directive if I Choose to Have One?

Make sure that someone such as your doctor, lawyer, or family member know that you have an Advance Directive and where it is located. Consider the following:

- If you have designated a healthcare surrogate, give a copy of the document to this person.
- Give a copy of your Advance Directive to your doctor for your medical file.
- Keep a copy of your Advance Directive in a place where it can be found easily.
- Keep a card or a note in your purse or wallet which states that you have an Advance Directive and where it is located.
- If you change your Advance Directive, make sure your doctor, lawyer and/or family member has the latest copy.

After reviewing the Advanced Directives information, you are welcome to access our hospital webpage link, and download the Advanced Directive at nicklauschildrens.org/AdvancedDirectives. If you may have a question, please contact the Nicklaus Children's Operator at 305-666-6511 Ext 0, where the operator will connect you to a social worker or leader to best answer your question.

Reference: Florida Statutes Chapter 765



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