

What You Need to Know

Advance Care Planning

What Is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is paperwork that explains your choices for health care if you are injured or become ill. You can also name someone to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Why Do I Need Advance Care Planning?

It is never too soon to put your wishes in writing. A medical crisis is the worst time to begin making serious decisions. It is best to make choices before you are sick or are in pain, and before you or your loved ones are upset.

Texas hospitals encourage you to think through these issues, share your wishes with your loved ones, and put them in writing while you are healthy.

What Does the Law Say?

Under Texas law, there are 5 kinds of advance care plans. They are also called advance directives. You can fill out paperwork for 1 or more, depending on your needs and wishes.

Types of Advance Care Plans



Medical Power of Attorney

This allows you to choose a person to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself.



Living Will (Directives to Doctor and Family or Proxy)

This allows you to specify for providing, withdrawing, or withholding medical care if an injury or illness cannot be cured.



Out-of-Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order

This allows capable adults to refuse certain care in non-hospital settings where staff are called to assist, including hospital emergency rooms and outpatient settings (clinics/doctor's offices).



In-Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order

This allows capable adults to refuse CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) if their breathing or heart stops while they are in the hospital.



Declaration for Mental Health Treatment

This allows a court to determine when you become incapacitated, and when this wish becomes effective. The paperwork expires in 3 years, unless you are incapacitated at that time.

It is best to put your wishes in writing before a hospital stay or before you get sick.

Hospitals are required to give adults information on advance care planning. Be sure to let your doctors know if you have advance care planning paperwork.

If you do not have advance care planning paperwork, we will give you information as needed.

For more information, please talk to your doctors, nurses, pastoral care team, faith community, or other hospital staff.

Things to Know

- Advance care plans do not need to be notarized. They only need to be witnessed, signed, and dated.
- Two witnesses are required.
- Advance care plans signed in other states are valid in Texas.
- The latest dated document is recognized if there is any conflict in paperwork.
- Access to medical care will not change if there is no advance care planning paperwork.
- Having an advance care plan will not affect insurance policies or premiums.

Fill out paperwork that is most important to you. Store your paperwork in a safe place, but not in a safety deposit box. Share copies with your doctor and your loved ones. Take copies with you to the hospital.

