Advance Directives

What is an advance directive?

"Advance directives" are legal documents about health care choices for anyone 18 years of age or older, with or without a medical condition. In them, you can write your plans and make your wishes known if you are not able to speak for yourself. These documents can be updated or withdrawn at any time.

Types of advance directives

1. Healthcare power of attorney

- Allows you to choose a person you trust to make decisions about your medical care. This applies if you are **temporarily or permanently** not able to communicate and make decisions for yourself.

- Includes decisions about the end of life as well as other medical situations.

- Goes into effect when your doctor says that you are not able to make your own medical decisions.

- Also known as a "healthcare proxy", "appointment of healthcare agent", "durable power of attorney for healthcare" or "medical power of attorney".

2. Living will

- Guides your family and healthcare team about medical treatment you do and do not wish to receive. This applies if you are permanently not able to speak for yourself.

- Specifically addresses treatments that extend life. These are medical procedures that support the body and keep a person alive when the body is not able to function on its own.

How to do the paperwork

Forms can be obtained from the hospital, the local bar association (lawyer's association) or online through the Ohio Hospital Association at **https://ohiohospitals.org/Member-Services/Services/Advance-Directives.aspx**. You do not need a lawyer to complete the advance directive forms. However, the forms need to be signed by two witnesses or a notary. The witnesses cannot be family members, your health care provider or the person whom you have named to act as your "decision maker." A social worker can help you with the paperwork.