



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

### 1. What is advance care planning?

It is a process in which you learn out about health care decisions and treatment options you may face, weigh them against what is important to you, talk with your loved ones and healthcare providers about your wishes, and record the kind of health care you want if you are living with an advanced illness.

### 2. Are there resources that can help me with this process?

Workbooks and planning guides are available to help with this process, and you can access them on our website at <http://cchospice.org/resources/advance-care-planning/>. This page--  
<http://cchospice.org/ittwt/>--is dedicated to The Carolinas Center's *Isn't It Time We Talk?* materials, including a workbook that is intentionally designed to guide understanding about advance care planning and allow space for people to read about, think about and record their wishes. Ultimately, this workbook is about having a voice in how you want things to go for you as you near the end of your life – whether that is a sudden event or a long-term illness.

### 3. What is an advance directive/advance health care directive? Where can I get copies?

It is any legal document that states medical treatments and/or life-sustaining measures that you would or would not want. It is your written plan to be used at an end-of-life situation if you are unable to communicate your health care choices.

**A Living Will**, also known as the **Declaration of Desire for a Natural Death**, is a legal document that outlines any medical and life-sustaining treatments that you would or would not want if you become terminally ill.

**A Health Care Power of Attorney** is a legal document that names another person to be your health care decision maker. It only takes effect if you are unable to speak for yourself.

These two documents are state-specific and are widely available at no cost. They can be obtained from your local healthcare provider, hospital, hospice provider, or an attorney.

- North and South Carolina advance directives can be found on our website: <http://cchospice.org/resources/advance-care-planning/>.
- All state-specific directives can be found at: <http://caringinfo.org>.

**Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment** (Also called **POST**, **MOST** and/or **POLST**) is both a medical order and a legal document and tells health care providers what treatments you would want *in a medical emergency*, including resuscitation, intubation, antibiotic use, and feeding tube. Unlike other advance directives, they are actual physician orders and are used at stages of declined health or terminal illness; so, they can only be obtained from your health care provider, hospital or local hospice organization.

- In North Carolina, **MOST (Medical Orders for Scope of Treatment)** is in effect and can be used everywhere.
- In South Carolina, **POST (Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment)** is currently being piloted in Charleston and Greenville counties and should be available statewide by 2017.

**Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR)** is a medical order and legal document that states you do not want resuscitation (which may include CPR, intubation, and ventilation) to be attempted if your heart or breathing stops. This order is activated when you are living with a life-threatening illness.

#### **4. When should I complete my advance directives?**

**Living Wills** and **Health Care Powers of Attorney** should be completed by competent adults 18 years of age or older while they are still capable of making decisions for themselves. Many people choose to complete their advance directives at an important life event such as a marriage or birth of a child and often as they are completing other legal documents such as a will. **Medical Orders** are completed during discussion with your health care provider at stages of declined health or terminal illness.

#### **5. Who should I choose to make healthcare decisions for me when I can't?**

Deciding who will speak for you if you are unable to is one of the most important aspects of advance care planning. Your *healthcare power-of-attorney* (also known as *agent*) should be someone close to you who knows your values and wishes and is strong enough to carry out your wishes if needed. It can be a spouse, close family member or friend who is readily available to healthcare providers if needed.

#### **6. Where should I keep my advance directives?**

You should keep the original copy of your advance directives with your other important legal documents where they can be easily found. Give a copy to your health care power of attorney who knows where to find the original, and copies to your health care provider to put in your medical record. You can also share copies with family member, close friends, your spiritual advisor and your attorney.

#### **7. What happens if I don't have an advance directive?**

If you do not have a written advance directive, health care providers and your loved ones may not know your wishes regarding your healthcare. There is a provision in each state of a priority list of those who can make decisions in the absence of a written advance directive.

#### **8. Will my advance directive be honored in other states?**

As long as your written advance directive substantially conforms to the requirements for documents in the new state, it will probably be honored. It is always a good idea, however, to update advance directives when you relocate, using state approved forms.

#### **9. What if I need or want to change my health care agent, or the care and treatment I may or may not want?**

You are free to make changes at any time regarding your agent or your wishes for future care. If this happens, you should complete a new form, collect and destroy all copies of the old form, and make sure your healthcare provider, your health care agent and others have a copy of the most current version.

#### **10. How do I register to become an organ or tissue donor?**

For detailed information, and to register as an organ or tissue donor, visit [www.donatelife.net](http://www.donatelife.net).



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