

ADVANCED DIRECTIVES: POINTS FOR HAVING *THE TALK*

What is advance care planning?

Advance care planning is a series of conversations you have with your loved ones, your health care providers, and anyone else who may be involved in your health care about the values, preferences and wishes that you would want to be honored if you could no longer participate in your own health care decisions.

What is an advance directive?

An advance directive is a general term for one document that includes a living will to express your wishes for your health care and a medical power of attorney to appoint someone to make decisions on your behalf if you are unable to. An advance directive allows you to give instructions about your future medical care if you become too ill to participate in medical decision making. Each U.S. state has different laws regarding advance directives (<https://www.nhdd.org/state-specific-resources/>).

What is a living will?

A living will is a document where you state your wishes about your health care treatment, it can also communicate your personal values, goals and other preferences for your medical care.

What is a medical power of attorney?

A medical power of attorney names the person you would want to make medical decisions for you if you were no longer able to make decisions for yourself. It can also be called a health care proxy, durable power of attorney for health care or appointment of a health care agent. The person named may be called a health care agent, surrogate, attorney-in-fact, or proxy.

What resources are available to help with *the talk*?

CHA's *Advance Directives: Expressing Your Health Care Wishes* can help you think about advance care planning and prepare an advance directive. Although it reflects the perspective of the Catholic tradition it is helpful to people from any faith tradition. *Five Wishes* is a form that can be used to document your decisions. Finally, the *Conversation Project* offers several starter kits to help plan for *the talk*.

© Catholic Health Association of the United States