
PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT
LIVING WILLS / HEALTHCARE REPRESENTATIVE

What is an Advance Directive?

An advance directive is a legal document through which you may provide your wishes concerning your health care and /or to appoint someone to act on your behalf. An Advance Directive will allow you to make your wishes known as far as what kind of medical treatment you want or don't want, when you are unable to do so.

Advance Directives are prepared before any condition or circumstance occurs that causes you to be unable to actively make a decision about your health care.

In Connecticut, advance directives include:

- the living will and health care instructions
- the appointment of a health care representative

What is a Living Will?

A living will is a document that may state your wishes regarding any kind of health care you may receive. If your medical condition is terminal or you are permanently unconscious, the living will can also tell your physician whether you want "life support systems" to keep you alive or whether you do not want to receive such treatment, even if refusing treatment can result in death. A living will only goes into effect when you are unable to make or communicate your decisions about your medical care.

What is "terminal condition" and "permanently unconscious" mean?

A patient is in a "terminal condition" when the physician finds that the patient has a condition which is (1) incurable or irreversible and (2) will result in death within a relatively short time if life support systems are not provided. "Permanently unconscious" means a permanent coma or persistent vegetative state where the patient is not aware of himself or his surroundings and is unresponsive.



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What is a “life support system”?

A “life support system” is a form of treatment that only delays the time of your death or maintains you in a state of permanent unconsciousness. Life support systems may include:

- devices such as respirators and dialysis
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation

It does NOT include:

- normal means of eating and drinking, such as eating with the assistance of another person or through a straw: or
- medications that help manage pain

What is a “health care representative”?

A “health care representative” is a person whom you authorize in writing to make any and all health care decisions on your behalf including the decision whether to withhold or withdraw life support systems. **A health care agent does not act unless you are unable to make or communicate your decisions about your medical care.** The health care agent will make decisions on your behalf based on your wishes, as stated in a living will or as otherwise known to your health care agent.

For Connecticut’s Guide on “Planning for Future Health Care Decisions”

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