

A GUIDE TO ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

This brochure explains your right to make health care decisions and to make those wishes known to your doctor or other health care providers. Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network will honor your wishes to the extent permitted by law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

1. **WHY DO I NEED AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?**

If you cannot make medical treatment decisions, your doctor will ask your closest relative or friend to help decide what is best for you. Sometimes your loved ones may not know what your wishes are. This is why it is important to say in ADVANCE what you would want to happen if you cannot speak for yourself. There are several kinds of ADVANCE DIRECTIVES you can use to tell health care providers about the care you wish to receive - if you ever become unable to tell them your wishes.

2. **WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ADVANCE DIRECTIVES?**

Advance directives recognized in Pennsylvania are:

- Living wills
- Durable power of attorney for health care decisions
- Organ donor cards.

3. **WHAT IS A LIVING WILL?**

A LIVING WILL is a written legal document that speaks for you, only if you are unable to tell us the kind of medical care or treatment you do or do not want. The Living Will clearly states your decision about care, if you are in a situation where medical treatment would only serve to prolong the process of dying or to maintain you in a state of permanent unconsciousness. Pennsylvania does not specifically recognize “living wills” which would not allow a health care provider to give medical care that is beneficial or effective.

4. **WHAT IS A DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY?**

A DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY for health care decisions is a person who can make decisions about your medical care if you are unable to make those decisions for yourself. The person to whom you have given authority to make decisions for you is called a “surrogate” or “proxy”. It is a good idea to name a second person to make decisions in case your first choice is not available.

- 5. WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?**
Pennsylvania law states that your advance directive may be changed by you at any time. It is a good idea to review your advance directive every few years to make sure it still agrees with your wishes. Destroy your old written document and tell everyone who knew about it that you changed your mind. Give a copy of the new document to your doctor, health care provider and anyone else who had a copy of your old instructions.
- 6. WHAT IF MY DOCTOR DOES NOT WANT TO FOLLOW MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?**
It is very important that you talk to your doctor about your wishes while you are well. If he or she indicates a problem in following your wishes, you have the right to change doctors.
- 7. IF I CHOOSE NOT TO MAKE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE, WHO MAKES TREATMENT DECISIONS FOR ME?**
As long as you are able, you and your doctor will decide about your care together. If you are unable to communicate your wishes or to make decisions, your doctor will discuss your plan of care with your family. If you have no family, a court order may be required to decide your plan of care.
- 8. WHERE CAN I GET A FORM TO COMPLETE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?**
Examples of forms to complete an advance directive are available through your doctor, your clergy, a hospital, or local groups such as the offices of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the local bar (attorney) association, or County Area on Aging offices. A sample form is enclosed with this brochure.
- 9. WHERE SHOULD I KEEP MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?**
You should give a copy of your advance directive to your family doctor, lawyer, family, and those people you have named to make decisions for you, if you are unable to make them yourself.
- 10. DO I HAVE TO BRING A COPY OF MY ADVANCE DIRECTIVE EVERY TIME I COME TO THE HOSPITAL?**
Yes, you should bring them with you each time you come to the hospital. You will be asked each time you enter the health care system whether or not the information in the statement still applies. If the information does not apply, please let us know. You do not have to have an advance directive to be admitted to the hospital or home health agency.
- 11. WHAT MAKES AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE A LEGAL DOCUMENT?**
An ADVANCE DIRECTIVE must be:
1. signed by you
 2. signed by two capable witnesses at least 18 years of age, who are not medical personnel or family members.
 3. dated

The document does **NOT** have to be notarized and a lawyer does not have to write a living will for you.

12. IS A “LIVING WILL” EFFECTIVE WHEN I AM PREGNANT?

Pennsylvania law generally does not permit a doctor or other health care provider to honor the “living will” of a pregnant woman who has directed that she not be kept alive. The terms of such a “living will” may be honored, however, if the woman’s doctor determines that life-sustaining treatment:

- (1) will not maintain the woman in a manner that will allow for the continued development and birth of the unborn child,
- (2) will physically harm the pregnant woman, or
- (3) cause her pain which could not be relieved by medication.

If your “living will” is not honored because you are pregnant, the Commonwealth must pay all of the usual, customary, and reasonable expenses of your care.

GLOSSARY

There are several terms you may need to understand as you prepare an advance directive. The definitions below should help you understand some forms of medical treatment about which you will be making choices.

1. ***Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)*** - A method used to try to restore stopped breathing and/or heartbeat.
2. ***Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)*** - A doctor’s order which alerts other health care providers that the patient or family, in consultation with the doctor, does not want the patient to be given CPR.
3. ***Respirators/Mechanical Ventilation*** - Machines used to assist or fully breathe for the patient.
4. ***Feeding Tubes*** - Tubes inserted into the body - usually through the nose, mouth, or stomach to feed patients who are no longer capable of eating normally.
5. ***Intravenous Therapy (I.V. Therapy)*** - Provides nutrition and water and/or medication through a thin tube placed in a vein.
6. ***Permanently Unconscious*** - The condition in which a patient is determined to be in a state of total loss of consciousness (vegetative state).
7. ***Life-Sustaining Equipment*** - A medical intervention given to a patient that prolongs life and delays death.
8. ***Surrogate*** - Another person to act on your behalf.
9. ***Brain Dead*** - Complete stopping of all function of the brain that cannot be reversed. A brain-dead person is not in a coma, but is, in fact, dead.

RESOURCE LIST

For educational materials on Advance Directives and other health care and legal issues of interest to the elderly, please contact the following organizations.

Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman

PA Department of Aging
231 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101-9896 • (717) 783-7347

Pennsylvania Council on Aging

231 State Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101-9896 • (717) 783-1924

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

335 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101 • (717) 238-2277

The Pennsylvania Medical Society

Division of Communication and Public Affairs

77 East Park Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8820 • (717) 558-7750

Lehigh County Area Agency on Aging

17 South 7th Street, Allentown, PA 18101-2400 • (610) 782-3034

Northampton County Area Agency on Aging -

Gracedale-Southwest Ground,
Gracedale Ave., Nazareth, PA 18064 • (610) 746-1990

Berks County Aging Department - County Service Center

633 Court Street, Reading PA 19601 • (610) 478-6500

The hospital will not condition the provision of care or otherwise discriminate against an individual based on whether or not the individual has an advance directive. The hospital will not follow advance directives where doing so violate professional standards of the law.

If you would like to discuss advance directives or living wills with someone while you are in the hospital, please call the Patient Representative office at 610-402-8222 or the Pastoral Care office at 610-402-8463. They are available Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

If you are on Lehigh Valley Home Care/Lehigh Valley Hospice services, please contact our chaplain or medical social workers at 610-402-7300.