

## Talk To Your Doctor & Family

The law says doctors, hospitals, and nursing homes must do what you want or send you to another place that will. Before you set up an Advance Directive, talk to your doctor ahead of time. Find out if your doctor is willing to go along with your wishes. If your doctor does not feel he or she can carry out your wishes, you can ask to go to another doctor, hospital, or nursing home.

Once you decide on the care you want or do not want, talk to your family. Explain why you want the care you have decided on.

Family members do not always want to go along with an Advance Directive. This often happens when family members do not know about a patient's wishes ahead of time or they are not sure about what has been decided. This can be prevented by talking with your family in advance.



## Change Your Mind Any Time

As long as you can speak for yourself, you can change your mind any time about what you have written down. If you make changes, tear up your old papers and give copies of all updated documents to everyone who needs to know.

### For More Information:

East Alabama Regional Planning and  
Development Commission AAA / ADRC  
P. O. Box 2186  
1130 Quintard Avenue, Suite 300  
Anniston, Alabama 36202

[info@EastAlabamaAging.org](mailto:info@EastAlabamaAging.org)  
[www.EastAlabamaAging.org](http://www.EastAlabamaAging.org)



## Deciding About Your HEALTH CARE

- If you are 19 or older, the law says that you have the right to decide about your medical care.
- If you are very sick or badly hurt, you may not be able to say what medical care you want.
- If you have an **Advance Directive**, your doctor and family will know what medical care you want if you are too sick or hurt to talk or make decisions.

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## What Is An Advance Directive?

An Advance Directive is used to tell your doctor and family what kind of medical care you want if you are too sick or hurt to talk or make decisions. If you do not have one, certain members of your family will have to decide on your care.

You must be at least 19 years old to set up an Advance Directive. You must be able to think clearly and make decisions for yourself when you set it up. You do not need a lawyer to set one up, but you may want to talk with a lawyer before you take this important step. Whether or not you have an Advance Directive, you have the same right to get the care you need.



## The Advance Directive Document

In Alabama, The Advance Directive Document includes two sections:

1. The **Living Will** is used to write down ahead of time what kind of care you do or do not want if you are too sick to speak for yourself.
2. The **Proxy** can be part of a Living Will but is not required. A Proxy is someone you choose to speak for you and make the choices you would make if you could. If you pick a Proxy, you should talk to that person ahead of time. Be sure that your Proxy knows how you feel about different kinds of medical treatments.

Another way to pick a Proxy is to sign a **Durable Power of Attorney** for health care in which you name another person, called an agent, to act on your behalf. The person you select as your agent does not need to be a lawyer.

If you complete an Advance Directive form, you are not required to name a proxy or have a Durable Power of Attorney. You may also have a Durable Power of Attorney without completing an Advance Directive. Or, another option is to have an Advance Directive *and* a Durable Power of Attorney for health care.

Hospitals, Hospices, Home Health Agencies, and Nursing Homes usually have forms you can fill out if you want to set up an Advance Directive. It is very important for these forms to be completed correctly. If you have questions, you should ask your own lawyer, or call your local **Aging and Disability Resource Center** for help.



## Setting Up An Advance Directive

It is important for an Advance Directive to be completed accurately, so that you receive the medical treatment you desire. Talk to your family and doctor now, so they will know and understand your choices. Give them a copy of what you have signed. If you go to the hospital, give a copy of your Advance Directive to the person who admits you to the hospital.

## What Do I Need To Decide?

You will need to decide if you want treatments or machines that will make you live longer, even if you will never get better. An example of this is a machine that breathes for you.

Some people do not want machines or treatments if they cannot get better. They may want food and water through a tube or pain medicine. With an Advance Directive, you decide what medical care you want.



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