

Your Right to Make Decisions Affecting Your Care

Grand View Health honors your right to make decisions regarding your health care. We encourage you to think in advance about what treatment you would accept or refuse if you had an end-stage medical condition or became permanently unconscious, and could not express your wishes. One way to make sure your wishes would be followed in such an event is to have written instructions, called advance healthcare directives, that explain what kind of treatment you would want. Three types of advance healthcare directives related to healthcare choices are recognized in Pennsylvania: living wills; power of attorney for healthcare decisions; and combination documents. They are legal documents that enable healthcare personnel to obtain information about your wishes should you not be able to communicate. Usually, they are written in advance of serious illness and state your choices for health care, or name someone to make those choices if you become unable to make decisions.

Types of Advance Healthcare Directives in Pennsylvania

Living Will

A legal paper that spells out the kind of life-prolonging medical care you would want—or would not want—if you had an end-stage medical condition or became permanently unconscious and were unable to make your own decisions.

Power of Attorney for Healthcare Decisions

A signed and dated document that gives another person the legal right to make decisions regarding your health care if you are not able to make such decisions yourself. This person will have access to your medical records.

Combination Document

A document that incorporates features of both a living will and a healthcare power of attorney.

You may revoke an advance directive at any time. Any changes or revocations should be signed and dated and you should give copies to your family and doctor.

Advance Healthcare Directives Go Into Effect Only Under Certain Conditions

It is important to know that an advance healthcare directive goes into effect when you are in our hospital only if Grand View has a copy of it. Please bring a copy of your advance healthcare directive with you every time you are admitted to Grand View. Also, give copies of your advance healthcare directive to your doctor and loved ones so your wishes would be known should you be admitted to the hospital unexpectedly.

Additionally, for a living will to go into effect:

- Your doctor must determine that you have an end-stage medical condition or are in a state of permanent unconsciousness
- Your doctor must determine that you are incompetent to make medical decisions

A power of attorney for healthcare decisions goes into effect only when you are unable to make healthcare decisions for yourself. Conditions that might prevent you from being able to make decisions for yourself include the effects of anesthesia or other medications, a state of unconsciousness (either temporary or permanent) and serious illness or injury.

Advantages of Having an Advance Healthcare Directive

An advance healthcare directive:

- Helps protect your right to make medical choices that can affect your life
- Allows your family to know and understand your wishes
- Gives physicians and other healthcare workers involved in your care guidelines regarding the care you want to receive
- Allows you to give special directions to your healthcare providers on topics, such as pain relief
- Enables you to indicate your desire to forego certain life-prolonging treatment, i.e., breathing machines, feeding tubes, or dialysis, when there is little or no chance of recovery

Grand View's Responsibilities

Grand View and other healthcare providers must provide necessary medical care to all individuals in their care. We are relieved of this duty only if we can show that the care does not conform with a person's wishes. An advance healthcare directive is one way we can show that we are following your instructions. Your decision to either have—or not have—an advance healthcare directive in no way affects the care you receive at Grand View.

Federal law requires Grand View and other hospitals to ask you upon admission whether you have a living will. We will document your answer in your medical record. If you have an advance healthcare directive, please bring a copy with you. At Grand View, your advance healthcare directive is viewed as a statement of your wishes and is used by the attending physician in determining your treatment plan.

If you do not have an advance healthcare directive and are interested in making one, we will provide you with the opportunity to speak with individuals who can help you, such as a case manager. Risk Management and Case Management cannot provide legal advice, but can supply examples of advance healthcare directives. Example documents may also be available through your doctor, your county bar association, your county Area Agency on Aging office or your local chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons. The law requiring hospitals to ask patients about living wills applies to adult patients.

People You May Want to Involve When Creating Advance Healthcare Directives

It is a good idea to talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of any medical procedure or course of treatment that your physician recommends. Ask about possible side effects and any alternatives to the proposed procedure or course of treatment. You may accept or reject your doctor's advice and you may seek a second opinion.

Once you have made your decisions about what instructions to include in your advance healthcare directive, it is important to talk with your doctor to make sure your physician is comfortable in following your wishes. Likewise, it is a good idea to make sure the person you have given permission to make decisions on your behalf is willing to follow your wishes.

If you tell your physician or your family members about the health care you want to accept or refuse, but do not put your instructions in writing, your wishes will sometimes be followed by healthcare providers, depending on how detailed and recent these instructions are. If you want to be certain your wishes are followed, it is best to put them in writing.

Give a copy of your advance healthcare directive to your family doctor, lawyer, family member and to those people you have named to make decisions for you if you are unable to make them. You should also bring a copy with you every time you are being admitted to a hospital, nursing home or other healthcare facility. You should review your advance healthcare directive periodically to make sure your wishes have not changed. Make sure that when there are changes to your advance directive, all old copies are destroyed.

Although you do not need an attorney to draw up advance healthcare directives, lawyers may know best how to advise you regarding some legal rules that apply to power of attorney for healthcare decisions.

Grand View Policies Related to Advance Healthcare Directives

Grand View has several policies in place to protect your rights to accept or refuse care. They involve issues related to efforts to support vital bodily functions, such as breathing, the beating of your heart, hydration and nutritional intake. Another policy also specifies the donation of organs or tissues.

If you do not have an advance healthcare directive and are interested in creating one, please contact a representative of our Case Management or Risk Management Departments. If you are a hospice patient, please contact our Hospice Department.

Case Management
215-453-4487 (Dial 4487 within the hospital)

Risk Management
215-453-4969 (Dial 4969 within the hospital)

Hospice
215-453-4210 (Dial 4210 within the hospital)

Glossary

Agent (Healthcare Agent) An individual who, through an advance healthcare directive, you have given the authority to make healthcare decisions on your behalf. This authority is not restricted to end-of-life decision-making but usually is in effect only when you are incompetent.

Brain Death 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.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) A method used to restore stopped breathing and/or heartbeat.

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) A doctor's order that alerts other healthcare givers that the patient or family, in consultation with the doctor, does not want the patient to be given CPR.

End-Stage Medical Condition An incurable and irreversible medical condition in an advanced state caused by injury, disease or physical illness that will, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, result in death.

Feeding Tubes Tubes inserted through the nose, mouth, stomach, etc., to feed patients who are no longer capable of eating normally.

Incompetent Not able to understand, make and communicate healthcare decisions, even when provided appropriate information and aids.

Intravenous (IV) Therapy A treatment method that provides nutrition and water and/or medication through a thin tube placed in a vein.

Life-Sustaining Treatment A medical intervention given to a patient that prolongs life and delays death.

Permanently Unconscious A medical condition in which the patient has total and irreversible loss of consciousness and capacity for interaction with the environment, such as an irreversible vegetative state or irreversible coma.

Representative (Healthcare Representative) An individual who may make healthcare decisions for you should you become incompetent and have no controlling living will, healthcare agent or guardian. Unless you designate otherwise, your healthcare representative will be determined in the following order: 1. Spouse and adult child(ren) who is not the child(ren) of the spouse; 2. adult child(ren); 3. parent; 4. adult sibling(s); 5. adult grandchild(ren); and 6. close friend.

Respirators Machines used to assist or keep a patient breathing.