

Advanced Directives

Advanced Directives are not just for terminally ill people. If you were in a car accident or had a stroke or heart attack, does your family know what kinds of intervention you would want?

Advanced care directives help patients control the type of care they receive if they are unable to communicate their wishes. Unfortunately, few people ever complete a directive, leaving loved ones to make life and death decisions on their behalf without guidance.

It is always a good idea to discuss end-of-life care with your physician and family members, particularly if you have a life-threatening condition. While these discussions are never easy, completing an advanced care directive and leaving copies with your family and physician helps to ensure that your wishes are carried out.

Health Care Proxies and End of Life Care

When faced with difficult end-of life care decisions, families and physicians sort through many issues — legal, ethical, medical and more. These resources can help families sort through their options.

- **MOLST- Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment**
Standardized forms and resources for physicians, hospitals and nursing homes to discuss, document and communicate treatment decisions of a patient at the end of life.
- **Massachusetts Health Care Proxy Information and Forms**
Health care proxies are legal documents, recognized in all 50 states, through which an agent or surrogate acts on behalf of the incapacitated patient to make treatment decisions.
- **Important Differences Between Health Care Proxies and Living Wills**
Massachusetts law regarding health care proxies and living wills.
- **Facing End-of-Life Issues**
Information about the different types of advance directives.
- **American Association of Retired Persons**
Provides information on advance directives and includes information on where the AARP stands on end-of-life issues. Links to other sites are also provided.
- **Partnership for Caring**

Many useful resources, including forms for each state and a number of links to other sites.

There is a detailed description of many issues relating to end-of-life decisions, from euthanasia to health care proxies. Publications and videotapes can also be ordered from this site.

- **Growth House, Inc.**
A gateway to resources for life-threatening illness and end-of-life care
- **Hospice Federation of Massachusetts**
Information on hospice care, decision-making tools, and a hospice locator
- **On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying**
Provides end-of-life tools, resources, and care options. Learn about solutions for finding a better death and explore the options for humane care for the dying.