



# Advance Care Planning



[summahealth.org](https://summahealth.org)

# Contents

## Advance Care Planning

<b>Informal Advance Care Planning</b>	<b>4</b>
Who should I talk with?	4
What should I talk about?	4
<b>Formal Advance Care Planning</b>	<b>5</b>
Healthcare Power of Attorney (HCPOA)	5
Declaration for Mental Health Treatment	7
Living Will	7
Organ Donation Form	7
Disposition of Bodily Remains, Funeral Arrangements and Burial or Cremation Goods and Services	8
<b>Other Advance Care Planning</b>	<b>8</b>
Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Orders and Forms	8
What is a DNR order?	8

There are two kinds of DNR orders	9
<b>Frequently Asked Questions About Advance Directives</b>	<b>9</b>
Who can fill out Advance Directives?	9
Where can I find Advance Directive forms?	9
Do I need a lawyer to fill out an Advance Directive?	9
What should I do with my forms after filling them out?	9
Are advance directives permanent? What if I change my mind?	10
Do I have to complete every advance directive form?	10
How do I fill out a DNR?	10
Where can I get more information about Advance Directives and Advance Care Planning?	10
<b>Resources</b>	<b>11</b>



# Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning, or ACP, is exactly what it sounds like: planning now for medical care needs in your future. ACP can be informal and formal—and both are important! Regardless of our age or health, we may all face times when we require medical care but are unable to communicate our own wishes.

## What if...

- You're in an accident and are unconscious at the hospital?
- You become unwell and can't think straight because of pain or fever?
- You're sedated and cannot communicate?

Fortunately, there are steps you can take today to help make your wishes and values known to your providers in any circumstance where you may not be able to tell them yourself.

## How can I make my medical wishes known?

You can make your medical wishes known through Informal Advance Care Planning and Formal Advance Care Planning, which includes documents sometimes called "Advance Directives." Both informal and formal ACP is important!

## Informal Advance Care Planning

Informal ACP at its most basic is simply conversation and communication. The only requirement for informal ACP is some bravery. Speaking about potential serious illness or the end of your life can be challenging or even feel taboo, but for some, considering in advance what kind of medical care you may or may not want, especially if you are unable to speak for yourself, can provide comfort to you and your loved ones.

## Who should I talk with?

You can talk with anyone who cares about or cares for you, especially your friends or family. This might also include professionals, like your medical providers, lawyers, counselors or social workers, and pastors or other spiritual advisors.

## What should I talk about?

A good place to start talking about ACP is to consider your values and wishes about health and medicine, what makes life worth living for you, and even what a "good death" might look like for you. You might get really specific and discuss particular treatments, like how long you'd be willing to be on life support, such as a ventilator, if you had to be. You can consider who you might want to care for you – your loved ones? Hired care givers? – and where you might want that care – at home? In a nursing home? At an exotic location?



There are many resources to help you with these conversations – online and at the library, or through your medical providers, lawyers and spiritual advisors. There are lists, booklets, and even games to help you get started. Some of these resources can also be found at [summahealth.org/advancedirectives](https://summahealth.org/advancedirectives).

While we can't guarantee our future, we can hopefully help shape it through communication and planning.

## Formal Advance Care Planning

While conversations are vital, they are not legally binding. Formal approaches to ACP include filling out Advance Directives—legal documents that share your wishes about your medical care in case you are unable to share those wishes on your own. People may think Advance Directives are only for elderly or sick people, or for end-of-life decisions, but everyone can benefit from filling out Advance Directives and sharing them with their medical providers.

This brochure explains some Advance Directive forms that are available in Ohio and how they work. You can fill these out on your own, with your doctor, or with a lawyer. These forms can be notarized, but they can also be signed by two witnesses who are not blood relatives and who are not named in the document.

## In Ohio law, there are five formal Advance Directives to consider:

- Health Care Power of Attorney (HCPOA)
- Declaration for Mental Health Treatment
- Living Will
- Organ Donation Form
- Disposition of Bodily Remains, Funeral Arrangements, and Burial or Cremation Goods and Services

## Health Care Power of Attorney (HCPOA)

There are many circumstances where we might lose our ability to make our own medical decisions for short or long periods of time, including being unconscious, heavily sedated, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or delirious. If that happens, who will speak for you?

A Health Care Power of Attorney form allows you to choose a trusted person to participate in medical decisions on your behalf. That person is called your surrogate or your HCPOA. An HCPOA is activated only if you do not have the capacity to speak for yourself. In that circumstance, your surrogate can give permission to carry out your wishes for your medical care only (not financial or other decisions). Your surrogate helps with medical decisions for you based on your goals, values, and wishes, whether for a short or long while. These decisions can include minor procedures and diagnostics (like IV lines and X-rays) and major decisions (like intubation or feeding tubes).

#### Who should be my Health Care Power of Attorney?

You can choose any adult you trust to participate in medical decisions on your behalf when you cannot decide for yourself—your spouse, your partner, your sister, your best friend—it's up to you. You can also choose two alternate people to participate if your primary person is unable to participate. Be sure you talk with these trusted people about your medical wishes.

---

**A Health Care Power of Attorney form allows you to choose a trusted person to participate in medical decisions on your behalf.**

---

#### When does my Health care Power of Attorney take effect?

The HCPOA takes effect *only* when you cannot make your own care decisions and ends when you regain the ability to make your own choices again.

#### If I become unable to make my own medical decisions and don't have a Health Care Power of Attorney, who is authorized to make decisions on my behalf?

**Ohio law states that your next of kin (NOK) must participate in your medical care if you cannot act for yourself. Ohio law states that the hospital must contact your next of kin in the order listed below:**

1. Your spouse (must be legally married)
2. The majority of your adult children
3. Your parents
4. The majority of your adult siblings
5. The nearest adult related to you by blood or adoption

The first person in that list willing and able to act as your surrogate will then participate in medical decisions on your behalf.

Your healthcare providers are obligated to contact next of kin, even if you are estranged. Because of this, for many people, an HCPOA is vital part of healthcare. You may prefer different people, like non-married partners, chosen family, or friends, to best represent your values and wishes. In that case, filling out an HCPOA form is incredibly important!



#### Declaration for Mental Health Treatment

The Declaration for Mental Health Treatment form allows you to name a person to participate specifically in mental healthcare decisions for you if you cannot make those decisions for yourself. This document also allows you to share your wishes about mental health treatments such as medications and therapy (including electro-convulsive therapy), what mental health hospitals and providers you prefer or decline, and your treatment preferences or instructions.

You might benefit from this form if you have been diagnosed with mental illness or if you have developed an illness that may affect your mental health as the disease progresses.

Before you complete a Declaration for Mental Health Treatment, it may be helpful to contact your lawyer and discuss your available options. Your lawyer can help you complete the Declaration for Mental Health Treatment, but you don't need a lawyer to complete this form.

It is also important that you discuss your treatment preferences with any mental health professional providing services to you.

#### Living Will

A Living Will allows you to share your wishes about life-prolonging treatments, like breathing machines and feeding tubes. This document only goes into effect if you become permanently unconscious or terminally ill and are unable to tell your physician or family what kind of life-sustaining treatments you want to receive.

#### Before your Living Will goes into effect, you must be either:

1. Terminally ill and unable to tell your physician your wishes regarding healthcare services (see definition of "terminally ill" in the Living Will Declaration Form);
- OR
2. Permanently unconscious. To be considered permanently unconscious, two physicians (one of whom must be a medical specialist in an appropriate field) must decide you have no reasonable possibility of regaining consciousness.

#### Organ Donation Form

In Ohio, you can choose whether or not to be an organ donor at the BMV. But Organ Donation Forms allow you to be more specific about your wishes by designating specific organs and tissues for donation, and by indicating if you are willing to donate for transplantation, therapy, research, and/or education purposes.



## Disposition of Bodily Remains, Funeral Arrangements and Burial or Cremation Goods and Services

While an HCPOA form names who can participate in medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to, an HCPOA form expires at your death. The “disposition” form specifically names someone to oversee the disposition of your body after death. That person is called your Successor. As with other documents, choose someone you trust to be your Successor and discuss your wishes with them. You may wish to name the same person to be your HCPOA surrogate and your Successor, but you can also name someone else.

If you do not name someone as your Successor in the Disposition of Bodily Remains form, the medical team will ask your family to make those decisions. The order of family is similar to the order of family for your next of kin for a medical surrogate: your spouse; adult children; parents; siblings; grandparents; grandchildren; lineal descendants of decedent’s grandparents; the guardian if there was one; any other person willing to assume the right of disposition.

## Other Advance Care Planning Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Orders and Forms

A Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order is different from other ACP forms: a DNR order is written after discussion with you, or, if you are unable to participate in such a discussion, with your HCPOA or next of kin. Because it is a medical order, you cannot fill out a DNR on your own, but you can and should talk about your wishes with your medical providers, HCPOA, family and friends.

### What is a DNR order?

A DNR is written by a physician, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN), or a Physician Assistant (PA). It can be valid only during a hospital admission, or it can be “portable” to any healthcare facility or at home through filling out an official State of Ohio DNR form with your healthcare provider.



DNR orders tell healthcare providers what to do if your heart stops beating or if you stop breathing. A DNR order is typically used for people with advanced chronic illnesses, serious conditions from which recovery is not expected, terminal illnesses, or people who are very frail and would not be helped by CPR.

## There are two kinds of DNR orders

### DNR Comfort Care – Arrest (DNR-CCA)

A DNR Comfort Care – Arrest order only becomes active if your heart stops beating or you stop breathing. Prior to that point, all helpful and appropriate medical interventions may be used. If the DNR protocol is activated, then no CPR or other resuscitation measures will be attempted. At that point, your care will be transitioned to comfort and supportive care measures.

### DNR Comfort Care Only (DNR-CCO)

A DNR Comfort Care Only order states that, upon activation, your care will be transitioned to only comfort and supportive care measures. If a DNR Comfort Care order is activated, no attempts will be made to perform CPR or to prolong the dying process—instead, nature will be allowed to take its course, with the medical team providing comfort and supportive care measures. These measures may include care for you like suctioning, providing oxygen, repositioning, controlling bleeding and providing medication for pain and other symptoms. It can also include emotional support for you and your loved ones.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Advance Directives

### Who can fill out Advance Directives?

If you are 18 years or older and can make your own decisions, you can fill out an Advance Directive. Others may help you fill out Advance Directives, but you must be able to make your own decisions. No one is allowed to fill out an Advance Directive for you or without your knowledge.

## Where can I find Advance Directive forms?

Many people and places that give you medical care have Advance Directive forms—you just have to ask for them! Additionally, they can be found on the internet (including Summa Health’s website: [summahealth.org/advancedirectives](http://summahealth.org/advancedirectives)) or from legal professionals.

### Do I need a lawyer to fill out an Advance Directive?

No, you do not need a lawyer to fill out advance directives, but you can consult with a lawyer if you wish. Most forms require signatures either from a notary or two witnesses. Those witnesses cannot be the person or people you name as agents in the document; your spouse; your children; anyone else related to you by blood, marriage or adoption; your attending physician; or, if you are in a nursing home, the administrator of the nursing home.

### What should I do with my forms after filling them out?

Be sure to tell your HCPOA, family and friends – the people closest to you – about what forms you have filled out and what choices you have made.

### Additionally:

- Give copies to your doctor and healthcare facility to put into your medical record.
- Bring copies with you each time you come to the hospital.
- Put a copy of your forms with your personal papers.
- Give copies of your forms to a trusted family member or friend, your lawyer, or your clergy person.
- If you have chosen someone as a Health Care Power of Attorney, you should give that person a copy of that form.



## Resources

**Summa Health:**  
**Social Work Department**  
 330.375.3145

**Ethics Committee**  
[bioethics@summahealth.org](mailto:bioethics@summahealth.org)

**Government Agencies:**  
**Ohio State Legal Services Association**  
 880.589.5888

**Ohio Hospital Association Website:**  
[ohiohospitals.org/advance-directives](http://ohiohospitals.org/advance-directives)

### **Are advance directives permanent?** **What if I change my mind?**

As long as you have the ability to make and communicate your decisions about any of these forms, you can revoke or change them whenever you like. To do this, you just need to communicate your wishes to your provider; you can also fill out new paperwork if you'd like.

Only you can make these changes. It is also a good idea to review your advance directives from time to time, especially if you experience major life changes—like marriage, divorce or deaths of loved ones—to ensure that your directives still represent your wishes.

### **Do I have to complete every advance directive form?**

No, you can complete one or many! Choose which advance directive forms are best for you.

### **How do I fill out a DNR?**

A DNR is a medical order, so it is not something you can fill out on your own. However, you can discuss Do Not Resuscitate orders and code status with your medical provider.

### **Where can I get more information about Advance Directives and Advance Care Planning?**

There are countless resources that can help you with informal and formal ACP and Advance Directives. Professionals like medical providers, lawyers, social workers, and spiritual advisors can all help with ACP, from starting the discussion to filing official paperwork. Summa Health's website also includes lots of information about ACPs, including links to the Advance Directives themselves, at **[summahealth.org/advancedirectives](http://summahealth.org/advancedirectives)**. You can also find further information at libraries, on the internet, and at many other locations where you might do other research.



For more information,  
visit **[summahealth.org/  
advance-care-planning](https://summahealth.org/advance-care-planning)**  
or scan the QR code.

Reviewed and approved by  
Summa's Ethics Committee, 2025

