

# Advance Care Planning Frequently Asked Questions – April 3, 2020 - 1520

*Spectrum Health contact: Jen Eriks*

## **What is Advance Care Planning?**

Advance care planning is a process in which individuals reflect on their goals and values and make plans about their current and future health care. Advance care planning not only provides valuable information for your loved ones, but also gives direction to health care professionals when an individual is not able to make and/or communicate their care preferences.

## **Why should I complete Advance Care Planning?**

Sharing your health care preferences with your loved ones takes the burden off them. It provides direction about what decisions you would want them to make. Life is unexpected, and this process not only informs your family and health care team about your wishes, but also makes it much more likely that your preferences will be followed.

## **Why is Advance Care Planning important to do now?**

Every individual age 18 and over should complete Advance Care Planning. Additionally, there is a lot of uncertainty in our world, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. One thing you can control is making your healthcare wishes known, should you become ill. There's no way to know if a sudden illness may leave you unable to make your own healthcare decisions. By documenting your preferences ahead of time, you and your loved ones can rest assured that your wishes are known.

## **What is a Patient Advocate?**

A Patient Advocate is a person who can, if enacted, speak for you if you are unable. Their responsibilities may include:

- Honoring your preferences about care
- Reviewing and releasing medical records
- Arranging for medical care and treatment
- Making decisions about your living situation

## **How should I decide who to pick as my Patient Advocate?**

Picking an appropriate Patient Advocate is important. This individual should:

- Be willing to take on this role and responsibility
- Have knowledge of what your preferences are
- Honor your preferences when making decisions for you, even if they disagree
- Be someone who can make medical decisions under stressful situations

## **If I've completed forms like this the past, how do I know if I should complete these again?**

You should re-evaluate and complete new Advance Care Planning documents if your Patient Advocate needs to be updated or if your health care preferences have changed. The more specific you can be about your preferences the more helpful this will be to your Patient Advocate, should they be in the position of deciding for you.

## **Who should be included in your Advance Care Planning conversation?**

It's beneficial for your loved ones who are involved in your care to participate in a conversation about Advance Care Planning. This allows them to hear your wishes, firsthand. If they cannot be physically present, they may be able to join by video or phone.

**Who should have a copy of your Advance Care Planning documents?**

- Your Patient Advocate
- Other loved ones or close friends
- All healthcare providers involved in your care

**What specific Advance Care Planning documents should I complete?**

- [Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare](#) Complete this form if you need to appoint a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, otherwise known as a Patient Advocate.
- [Treatment Preferences Form](#) Complete this form if you already have a Durable Power of Attorney and need to complete your Treatment Preferences only.
- [Out of Hospital DNR Form](#) Complete form if you elect for no CPR, in other words, you prefer to die a natural death.

**What helpful tools do you have to help make educated decisions about CPR and ventilator support?**

Respecting Choices® has temporarily made their decision aids available for public use. These decision aids are certified by the Washington State Healthcare Authority and provide facts about CPR and ventilator support.

- [CPR Decision Aid](#)
- [Help with Breathing Decision Aid](#)

**Will these forms only be honored at Spectrum Health?**

These forms are not specific to Spectrum Health and can be shared with, and used by, any of your healthcare providers.

**What should I do with the documents after I complete them?**

The fastest way to ensure your documents are received and scanned into your medical record are to email them to [Advancecareplanning@spectrumhelath.org](mailto:Advancecareplanning@spectrumhelath.org).

Other options are to fax or mail the forms to us, however, we do not currently have staff onsite at our office. If you're unable to get your documents to us, you can also bring them with you the next time you're seen at a Spectrum Health location.

Fax: 616.774.7618

Mailing address:  
Spectrum Health Advance Care Planning  
665 Seward Ave. NW, MC 541  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

*Even if your documents are not complete, for example, missing signatures, we encourage you to send them to us. The partially completed documents communicate your intent and can possibly be completed later with one of our staff.*



**If I elect for no CPR, how can I ensure my wishes are known to Emergency Medical Services (EMS)?**

Directions for how to order a DNR bracelet can be found here [DNR bracelet ordering instructions](#)

We also advise keeping a copy of your DNR order on your fridge and in your purse or wallet.

**Who can I reach out to if I have questions?**

If you need any assistance, please call 616-774-7615 or email [Advancecareplanning@spectrumhelath.org](mailto:Advancecareplanning@spectrumhelath.org).