

Advance Directives for Health Care

Advance Directives for health care express your wishes about medical care to loved ones and health care providers in the event that you can't speak for yourself---because of a coma, terminal illness, or traumatic emergency, for example.

There 2 types of Advance Directives

- A **Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care names who you want for a health care agent.** The Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Decisions is especially useful because it appoints someone to speak for you any time you are unable to make your own health care decisions, not only at the end of life. The person you choose is called your "agent."
- A **Living Will states your wishes in case you can't.** It can say you want or don't want certain types of care---to assist in keeping you alive or to ease pain. Issues such as organ donation and hospice treatment can be stated in a living will. It lets you state your wish to have life-sustaining procedures withheld or withdrawn in the event that you develop a terminal condition and can no longer make your own health care decisions. Your living will goes into effect when your doctor determines that you have a terminal condition and can no longer make your own health care decisions.



Who should I appoint as my agent?

Your agent is the person you appoint to make decisions about your health care if you become unable to make those decisions yourself. Your agent may be a family member or a close friend whom you trust to make serious decisions. The person you name as your agent should clearly understand your wishes.

You can appoint a second person as your alternate agent. The alternate will step in if the first person you name as an agent is unable, unwilling, or unavailable to act for you.

Discuss with your agent all of your wishes and review your directives on a regular basis. Make sure your agent has a copy of your advance directive.

So as to not conflict with your stated wishes, your agent cannot be:

- your doctor or other treating health care provider,
- an employee of your treating health care provider, or
- an employee of any hospital, psychiatric hospital or psychiatric treatment facility, hospice, nursing home, or similar institution.

What should my living will say?

Be sure to talk with your agent about your future medical care and describe what you consider to be an acceptable “quality of life.” A living will may cover

- Ventilators—to keep patients breathing
- Feeding tubes—to provide nutrients to patients that can’t eat or drink
- Intravenous therapy—to give medicine or fluid therapy through a vein
- Dialysis—to clean the blood if the kidneys stop working
- CPR—to revive someone that is not breathing and doesn’t have a heartbeat
- Palliative care—to ease pain
- Organ and tissue donation



Where can I get the forms?

Various websites offer forms for you to download and print.

www.wichitamedicalresearch.org

In addition, the forms are available at the Business Office at Gove County Medical Center.

How do I make an advance directive legal?

You must sign and date your advance directive and have that signature witnessed. You can have it witnessed by

- A notary public **OR**
- Two witnesses that are 18 years of age or older. The witnesses cannot be the person you appoint as your agent, related to you by blood, marriage or adoption, nor have any financial interest in your estate.

What do I do with the forms?

Keep the original forms in a safe, easy to reach place—not in a safety deposit box that would be difficult for someone to find. Give copies to your agent and your physician for their records. Also give a copy to your emergency contacts. Bring a copy with you when you are going to the hospital so they can add it to your medical record.