

Advance Care Planning: Frequently Asked Questions

Trinity Health Medical Group



**How to Make Health Care Choices and
Choose My Patient Advocate**



Advance Care Planning

At Trinity Health, we want to help you plan for you and your family's future. Since no one can predict an accident or illness, taking the proper steps in ensuring that your health care preferences are met is very important. Advance Care Planning is a way for you to discuss with your loved ones what your health care preferences are and what should happen in case any situation leaves you unable to make decisions for yourself.

By communicating your wishes to your loved ones, you are giving them an invaluable gift. If they must one day make health care decisions on your behalf, they will be prepared and confident in their executions rather than distressed and confused.

Just as you can give the gift of reassurance to those you love, you can also achieve your own peace of mind by documenting your wishes and properly distributing it to your advocate, other loved ones and your health care providers. By doing this, you ensure your wishes are carried out even if you one day are not capable of communicating them.

Advanced Care Planning facilitated conversations include:

- Reflections regarding your personal beliefs, values and wishes
- Information regarding the multiple health care options available
- Assistance in completing the Advance Directive to ensure the document is legally binding
- Facilitation by a trained professional on the topic of Advance Care Planning

Next steps:

- Reflect on your own wishes, values and beliefs. Learn about different health care options and decide what your preferences would be.
- Choose a person to be your Patient Advocate. Inform them of this choice and have a conversation with them as well as other loved ones about what you would want if you could not speak for yourself.
- Record your wishes on a legal document. Trinity Health Grand Rapids offers facilitated conversations with trained professionals for those who are ready to complete their Advance Directive.



8 out of 10
people strongly believe
it's important to put
their wishes in writing.

2 out of 10
people actually do so.

At Trinity Health, we strive to change the stereotype of Advance Care Planning.

What is an Advance Directive?

An Advance Directive is a written document that specifies the type of medical care you would want, or who you want to make decisions for you, should you be unable to do so. Two commonly known types of advance directives include:

Living Will

A Living Will is a written document that lists your wishes for health care choices if you are unable to express them yourself. Michigan courts DO NOT consider this form a legal document but may use it as a guide.

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is a written document that allows you to appoint someone to make decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so. This person is most commonly called a *Patient Advocate*. Michigan courts DO consider this a legal document if completed correctly.

When should I complete an Advance Directive?

Everyone 18 years of age or older can and should complete an Advance Directive. A serious illness or injury can occur at any time and it is best to be prepared. You can always update your Advance Directive and name a new patient advocate at any time.

Choosing Your Advocate

- Your advocate should be someone who knows you, your values and your beliefs.
- He or she should be someone you can trust to honor your wishes no matter how difficult the situation may be. It is crucial to have a conversation to explain your wishes as clearly as possible.
- He or she should be made fully aware of the responsibilities this role entails.

PATIENT ADVOCATE FAQs

Who can I choose as a Patient Advocate?

There are very few restrictions on whom you can choose to appoint. The advocate must be 18 years of age but is not required to be a relative or a U.S. citizen.

When does the Patient Advocate act on my behalf?

Your patient advocate can make decisions for you ONLY when you are unable to make decisions for yourself.

Who determines I am no longer able to make decisions?

You can only be deemed incapable to speak on your own behalf by the doctor responsible for your care and an additional doctor or psychologist upon examination.

Does my Patient Advocate have to pay for my care?

No. The role of a Patient Advocate does not create any form of responsibility to your own health care costs.

Do I need to use a lawyer to choose a Patient Advocate?

No. Some people choose to use a lawyer for assistance but it is not legally required. However, it is important to fill the document out with careful consideration.