

# Advance Directives for Healthcare

Healthcare Power of Attorney  
&  
Living Will



## **Introduction to Advance Directives**

Under Illinois law, every adult has the right to make decisions concerning medical treatment. The law allows for your rights and personal wishes to be respected even if you are too sick to make decisions.

Advance Directives are a legally-recognized means for communicating your healthcare wishes. Illinois law recognizes two kinds of Advance Directives:

- Living Will
- Healthcare Power of Attorney

An attorney is not needed to complete these documents, though you may choose to retain an attorney's assistance. It is advised to consult with your physician as you consider completing an Advance Directive. Decisions should be discussed and shared with your physician and family.

## **What is a Living Will?**

A Living Will is a legal document that states you do not want life-prolonging medical care in the event you become terminally ill and unable to make decisions.

If you are suffering from a terminal medical condition or illness with no reasonable probability of recovery, Illinois law permits you to direct that life-prolonging procedures be withheld or withdrawn in the final stages of that condition or illness.

Two people need to act as witnesses when you sign your Living Will. Neither your healthcare professional nor family members can witness.

## What is a Healthcare Power of Attorney?

A Healthcare Power of Attorney (POA) is a legal document that specifically allows you to name another person at least eighteen years old to make medical decisions on your behalf when you are unable to make decisions for yourself.

The person you choose to make your healthcare decisions is called your “agent.” Your agent cannot be your healthcare provider.

## What Your Agent Should Know

Your agent may function on your behalf for any length of time, and for both life-threatening and non-life-threatening medical conditions.

Your agent must be notified of such designation and should:

- be someone you trust,
- make decisions based on your wishes, and
- not base decisions on his/her personal preference.

## Your Agent's Role

When you are incapable of processing information and communicating your healthcare wishes, your agent is empowered to:

- consult with your healthcare providers,
- give informed consent to perform medical procedures, and
- refuse or request withdrawal of treatments on your behalf.

## **If Your Agent is Unavailable**

Illinois law establishes a procedure for selecting a surrogate if you have not completed a Living Will or selected an agent, or your agent is not available to make your healthcare decisions.

A surrogate is chosen by your physician from the individuals listed below, in order of priority:

1. If one already exists, a court-appointed guardian who has authority to make health care decisions.
2. Your spouse.
3. An adult child. If you have more than one child, a majority of the adult children who are reasonably available for consultation.
4. One of your parents.
5. An adult brother or sister. If you have more than one brother or sister, a majority of those who are reasonably available for consultation.
6. An adult relative (grandchild, cousin, etc.)
7. An adult friend who has shown special concern for you and is familiar with your activities, health, and religious or moral beliefs.
8. The guardian of your estate, if one has been appointed.

## **Advance Directives in Other States**

Advance Directives will influence your healthcare no matter where you are hospitalized. If your Advance Directive is in compliance with the law of another state, your wishes will be honored. If you spend a significant amount of time in more than one state, it is suggested you complete an Advance Directive in each of those states.

## Updating a Living Will and POA

A Living Will and POA can be changed or revoked at any time. Alterations and written revocation to these documents should be signed and dated. Copies should be given to your physician, family members and appropriate friends.

Even without an official written change, verbal direction given to your physician has priority over any statement in an Advance Directive, as long as you are able to make decisions for yourself and communicate your wishes.

## Where to obtain a copy of Advance Directives

If you have questions, concerns or wish to complete an Advance Directive, please call a chaplain in **Spiritual Care Services** at **847.618.4250**.

You can also ask a nurse to page a chaplain on **pager #2010**.

A copy of your Advance Directive is kept with your medical records. Please bring a current copy of your Advance Directive each time you are admitted to the hospital. The clinical staff must confirm that the Advance Directive on file is the latest version, and thus represents your current healthcare wishes.

## Communication

It is important that you speak with your physician, family members and close friends about your healthcare wishes. If they understand the type of healthcare you want, it will be easier for them to respect your wishes.

## Spiritual Care Services at NCH

Northwest Community Hospital recognizes that spiritual care is an integral part of healing and health. To help meet those needs, members of Spiritual Care Services are available around the clock to provide a variety of services, including, but not limited to:

- listening presence and clarifying conversation,
- accessing religious resources,
- space for prayer and contemplation,
- prayer and ritual support,
- sacramental ministry, and
- consultation with respect to medical decision making.

These services can be accessed by asking any staff member to call a chaplain at ext. 4250 or page a chaplain (pager #2010).

## NCH Mission

We exist to provide quality, compassionate healthcare services to the people of the northwest community.

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*Northwest Community is a charitable organization and provides financial assistance to people who are eligible. For more information, please call 847.618.4542, or visit our website at [www.nch.org](http://www.nch.org).*

800 West Central Road  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005  
[www.nch.org](http://www.nch.org)  
1.847.618.4YOU

