

## **Planning for medical decisions**

### **Advance Directive for Health Care**

**An Advance Directive allows you to express your wishes about end-of-life care.**

An Advance Directive is a document which gives someone else the authority to make your medical decisions and speak to your doctors if you ever lose the ability to communicate with your doctors yourself. An Advance Directive also gives you the opportunity to write down your wishes regarding end-of-life treatment like life support and tube feeding. It's important to know the difference between an Advance Directive and a POLST, which is also discussed on this site. Most importantly, an Advance Directive should be completed by all adults, including healthy adults, but a POLST is intended for someone of very advanced age or who has already been diagnosed with a serious illness and has very limited life expectancy. An Advance Directive is a legal document that should be part of any basic estate plan. A POLST is a medical document to be completed with your doctor only when you are very near the end of your life.

**Planning for your medical decisions is essential.**

“Planning for your medical decisions” means thinking about the type of medical treatment you might need later in life and choosing people you trust to communicate your wishes to your doctors. Even if you sign a power of attorney, the person you choose to manage your assets won't have the authority to make medical decisions or to communicate your health care wishes to your doctors.

**Be prepared for unexpected illness or injury.**

With an Advance Directive, you are planning ahead for the possibility that you may not always be healthy enough to communicate your health care wishes. Unexpected illness or injury can happen to anyone. For example, if you are involved in an accident which causes you to be hospitalized or to lose consciousness, or if you become sick in a way which causes you to become confused or to lose your memory, you may not be able to make your own medical decisions or you may lose the ability to communicate your wishes. The goal is to be prepared for incapacity before it happens by appointing trustworthy people to help you in advance. Signing an Advance Directive now, while you are still healthy enough to communicate your wishes, allows you to choose the person you trust the most to speak with your doctors if you need help in the future.

**Get started.**

Click [here](#) to print the Oregon Advance Directive form to fill out at home, or you can work with an estate planning attorney.

<http://wingsoregon.org/get-a-life-plan>