



ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

What is an Advance Directive?

A Living Will and Health Care Proxy are Advance Directives.

Living Will

Is your written wishes about medical treatment choices. It gives direction to health care providers if and when you are unable to speak for yourself.

Health Care Proxy

Is a document in which you assign authority to a health care agent, who will speak "in your voice" regarding medical decisions, if you are unable to speak for yourself.

When does a proxy get used?

Only when you cannot communicate for yourself.

Who can be my health care agent?

You can appoint anyone who is willing and 18 years of age or over. The proxy form needs to be signed by two witnesses.

Can't my family just speak for me?

New York does not recognize natural surrogates as general health care agents. For example, spouses are not 'automatically' a health care agent. Legal problems could arise with an appointed health care agent.

What should I do with my Advance Directives?

Give a copy to your healthcare providers, including your primary care physician. A copy should also be given to the people you named as your agent and alternate.

When should I complete an Advance Directive?

Ideally, when you are feeling well and have time to reflect and talk about your choices with family or friends. Certainly, when there is a chronic problem and absolutely when you are very ill.

Additional things to think about...

Let your agent know how you feel about artificial nutritional and hydration.

A living will should be the start of a lifelong conversation. Review the documents annually.