

decisions for you without necessarily describing what those decisions should be. A living will, on the other hand, often spells out what kind of life-sustaining treatment you want to receive and may or may not name someone to make those decisions for you should when a person can no longer make decisions for themselves in a medical crisis.

What if I don't leave instructions or name a person who will make decisions for me?

In Pennsylvania, if patients cannot let their wishes be known about care and they are unable to communicate for themselves, the law determines who gets to make the decisions.

Not just any family member will be appointed if nothing is previously specified. The law requires hospitals to follow a specific order - no matter how close a person may be to the appointee.

They are:

- Spouse and adult child who is not the child of the spouse
- Adult child
- Parent
- Adult sibling
- Adult grandchild
- Close friend who knows the patient's preferences and values

The law states that the person making the decision must be reasonably available. If he or she is not, the next person on the list is contacted.

May I have both a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care and a Living Will? Yes.



What if I change my mind after I have written a living will? You can change or cancel your advance directive at any time. Just be sure to notify family members, doctors and caregivers about any revisions and distribute updated copies of your form.

If I have more questions about advance directives, who should I contact?

1. Penn Highlands Case Management Department:

- Penn Highlands Brookville - 814-849-1891
- Penn Highlands Clearfield - 814-768-2401
- Penn Highlands Connellsville - 724-258-1015
- Penn Highlands DuBois - 814-375-3528
- Penn Highlands Elk - 814-788-8897
- Penn Highlands Huntingdon - 814-643-8778
- Penn Highlands Mon Valley - 724-258-1015
- Penn Highlands State College - 582-220-2157
- Penn Highlands Tyrone - 814-684-6320

2. Local Area Agency on Aging

3. Attorney Assistance

For assistance in obtaining an attorney, or for further information, contact the Pennsylvania Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service, or the SeniorLaw Helpline Call toll-free 1-877-PA SR LAW (1-877-727-7529) or www.seniorlawcenter.org.

What You Need To Know About Advance Directives

Penn Highlands Healthcare



An advance directive is a tool to help protect your medical wishes, instruct your physicians, and ease the stress on you and your family about making important decisions about your future.

As a competent adult, you have the right to tell other people, now, if and how you would like to receive medical care and treatment in the event that you need medical attention, but are physically or mentally unable to give instructions. Before you make any decisions about the issues addressed in this document, you should discuss them with your doctor, members of your family, and where appropriate, your lawyer.

There are three types of advance directives: Living Will, Healthcare Power of Attorney and a POLST.

LIVING WILLS

Living wills are simply written instructions for what patients want if they are unable to speak for themselves in a medical crisis. To be valid, a living will must be a written document that is dated and signed by the patient and two witnesses. If the patient cannot physically sign, someone can act on the patient's behalf in front of the two witnesses. In Pennsylvania, living wills do not have to be notarized, but in some states, they do. This is something people who travel a lot may want to consider

HEALTHCARE POWER OF ATTORNEY

Instead of having one's wishes in writing, a person can make decisions on behalf of a patient as things

happen. Adult patients can, at any time, appoint someone through a healthcare power of attorney legal agreement.

The healthcare power of attorney makes decisions when a person can no longer make decisions for themselves, as per the instructions of the power of attorney document. (Some people prefer to have a health-care power-of-attorney when they are competent, too, because they no longer want to make the decisions for themselves.)

Since the people are appointed while a patient is still competent, the people picked should know what the patient wants and how the patient feels about certain situations.

POLST

POLST, which is short for Pennsylvania order for life-sustaining treatment, is a bright pink form that is filled out by a patient's healthcare professional - a doctor, physician assistant or nurse practitioner - only when someone is nearing end-of-life.

The form is brightly colored, so it is easily recognizable as it travels with someone as he or she goes from home to a hospital or to a nursing home. The form is intended to provide clear communication for a patient's preferences for end-of-life treatment across the range of settings. The POLST form is recommended for persons who are seriously ill with a life-limiting advanced illness or anyone of advanced age with a strong desire to further define their patient care wishes. It is not for people with stable medical or functional problems who have many years of life expectancy. It is about current care, not future

care. The POLST is completed after discussion with a patient or their health care agent regarding their treatment preferences. By signing, the health care professional is assuming full responsibility for the medical indications of the orders and assuring they accurately reflect the person's values. Patients have the right to have or limit treatments as they wish, and those wishes become medical orders that are to be followed.

POLST is not a form filled out by yourself or a family member.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should I discuss my instructions with before I write them down? You are encouraged to discuss them with your doctor, members of your family, friends or other appropriate persons, such as your clergy or attorney. If you are writing a durable power of attorney for health care, you should discuss your wishes with the person you are naming as your power of attorney. Similarly, if you are writing a living will and naming someone to carry out your wishes, you should discuss your wishes with that person.

Who should I give my written instructions to?

You should give your written instructions to your family doctor, to your hospital, nursing home or other health care provider. You may also want to give a copy to your family or anyone involved in your health care decision-making process.

What are some of the major differences between a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care? A healthcare power of attorney generally names someone to make health care
