What is an advance directive?
An advance directive is a way to tell your family and doctor your wishes if you cannot make decisions yourself. A directive can include the type and extent of your medical care. There are forms to help you express your wishes to your family and doctor before a crisis.

Many people are nervous about starting an advance directive. But with the right forms and help from a social worker, you can feel good about the decisions you make.

What is power of attorney or a health care agent?
You can have another person make health care decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself. You can give that person authorization on a form called medical power of attorney. The person you choose is called an agent. This person can be a friend, family member, or licensed professional. This person should have these qualifications:

- Be 18 years old or older
- Be willing and able to speak on your behalf
- Know you and your wishes well
- Be a strong advocate for you with your doctors and family
- Be willing to talk with you about sensitive issues
- Be capable of making decisions important to you

Who should have advance directives?
Everyone. Each of us may face a medical crisis. Illness or injury can make anyone unable to make decisions for themselves.

When should I do my advance directives?
Now. It is best to do it while you are able to think clearly and before a crisis happens. You will also want to review and update your directives every year.

How do I get started?
Your doctor, nurse, or social worker can provide the forms to begin.

Can I change my mind?
Yes. You can change your directives any time you would like. Your directives only take effect if you cannot speak for yourself.

I have a directive in another state. Does it still work in Utah?
Each state has different laws about directives. You can talk with your treatment team to see if there are any conflicts with Utah’s laws. If you have moved to Utah, you should update your directives to the Utah form.

When choosing a health care agent, think of someone you feel close to—someone you trust to communicate with your doctors if you are not able.

Does having an advance directive keep me from getting the best care?
No. Your treatment team will give you the best care for the treatment you allow. Advance directives do not limit the quality of care, just the types of treatments that you choose.
Who do I give the forms to when they are completed?

Always give a copy of your forms to your agent. You may also share the forms with anyone you feel would be helpful. You might want to include these people:

- Loved ones
- Your treatment team
- Your attorney
- Your clergy

Be sure to keep a copy in a safe place.

What resources are available to help me?

You can meet with a social worker to help you through this process. You can also find resources in the G. Mitchell Morris Cancer Learning Center. These online resources may also help you:

University of Utah Center on Aging
http://aging.utah.edu/programs/utah-coa/directives/index.php

U.S. Living Will Registry
http://uslwr.com/formslist.shtml

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*Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) and Do Not Intubate (DNI)* orders tell those who are treating you to not perform life-saving treatments if needed. Your doctors or nurses still provide you with the best medical treatments according to your treatment plan. A DNR order still allows your doctor to give you pain medicine to help you be comfortable in a medical crisis.*