ADVANCE DIRECTIVES ARE FOR EVERYONE

An advance directive is a way to tell your loved ones and doctors your wishes if something happens and you can’t speak for yourself.

A directive can include the type and extent of your medical care. It can help your family and care team better understand your values.

ONLY 37% OF AMERICANS HAVE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE.

Being prepared can bring you and your loved ones peace of mind. This book will tell you more about advance care planning and how to

START THE CONVERSATION TODAY.
What is an advance directive?

Advance directive forms are a way to write down your wishes BEFORE a crisis. These legal documents tell your loved ones and doctors what medical treatments you want and don’t want in case you can’t speak for yourself.

Who should have one?

EVERYONE. Each person may face an unexpected medical crisis. Illness or injury can make anyone unable to make decisions or speak for themselves. That makes it much harder for family and loved ones to know what to do.

When should I fill out my advance directive?

NOW. It is best to do it while you are able to think clearly and before a crisis ever happens. It is a good idea to review and update your directive every year.

How do I get started?

Consider your basic beliefs about life and medicine. Talk about your fears with a loved one. Think about what matters most to you in a crisis:

Having family nearby?  
Being at home?  
Getting spiritual support?

Use the Utah Advance Health Care Directive forms to record your wishes. Your doctor, nurse, or social worker can help answer any questions.
Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can change or update a directive any time. Your directive only takes effect if you cannot speak for yourself.

Does having an advance directive keep me from getting the best care?

No. Advance directives do not change the quality of care you get, they just tell which treatments you do or don’t want.

I have a directive in another state. Does it work in Utah and other states?

Each state has different laws about directives. Talk with your health care team to see if there are any conflicts with Utah’s laws. If you now live in Utah, you should update your directive to the Utah form.
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 permission—called medical power of attorney—on a form.

The person you choose is called an agent. It can be a friend, family member, or licensed professional. The person should

- Be 18 years old or older
- Be willing and able to speak on your behalf
- Know you and your wishes well
- Advocate for you with your doctors and family
- Be willing to talk with you about sensitive issues
- Be able to make decisions important to you

Who do I give the forms to when they are completed?

Give a copy to your agent and one to your primary health care team. Keep a copy in a safe place. Share the forms with anyone you feel would be helpful such as your children, grandchildren, cancer care team, attorney, or clergy person.
FILLING OUT YOUR ADVANCE HEALTH CARE DIRECTIVE

By law, you need a witness with you when you fill out your advance directive. This person will sign the forms when you are done. The witness must be a “disinterested adult” which means

• The witness must be over age 18
• The witness cannot be related to you by blood or marriage
• The witness has no right or interest to your estate

Ask your social worker if you need help finding a witness.

When you fill out the forms:

• Write clearly using black ink.
• Write your name and the date on all pages.
• Use your initials instead of check marks.
• Write your birth date on the first page.
• Cross out sections that you have left blank.

After you fill out the forms:

• Give a copy to your agent. You may also give copies to members of your family.
• Keep the original form with your important papers.
• Take a copy to your next doctor’s appointment.
• If you are a patient at Huntsman Cancer Institute, you can also deliver or mail a copy of your form to the address below.

HEALTH INFORMATION
Huntsman Cancer Institute Hospital, Room 2130
1950 Circle of Hope
Salt Lake City, UT 84112
MORE RESOURCES

A social worker can help you with care planning, filling out the forms, and finding a witness.

You can also find resources in Huntsman Cancer Institute’s G. Mitchell Morris Cancer Learning Center:

- Visit the sixth floor of the cancer hospital
- Call 1-888-424-2100 toll free
- Email cancerinfo@hci.utah.edu

These online resources may also help:

University of Utah Center on Aging
ucoa.utah.edu/coreissues/directives

U.S. Living Will Registry
uslivingwillregistry.com/formslist.shtm

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