



North Central Surgical Center wants you to know about advanced directives and making known your wishes about receiving or refusing care. The following information is available at the Texas Hospital Association website.

What Are Advance Directives?

Advance directives are documents that state your choices for healthcare, or name someone to make those decisions if you are unable to make your wishes known in the future because of illness or injury. By putting your wishes in writing, you take the burden off your family and doctors for making those most difficult decisions.

Why Do We Hear So Much About Advance Directives?

Advances in medical technology can prolong life indefinitely for patients in comatose or vegetative states with no hope of recovery. The media is filled with highly publicized legal cases involving such patients whose families and medical providers disagree on their end-of-life care. These situations are emotionally and financially draining, and can be avoided by creating advance directives.

Why Do I Need an Advance Directive?

Even if you're young and healthy, it is never too soon to put your wishes in writing. No doubt, the middle of a medical crisis is the worst time to begin thinking about these critical questions, when your family is upset and you may be disoriented or in pain.

Texas hospitals encourage you to think through these issues, share your wishes with your loved ones, and put them writing while you are healthy.

What Does the Law Say?

Nearly a decade ago, the Texas Legislature passed the Texas Advance Directives Act, which clarifies the rights of adult patients to make important legal decisions about their health care in advance.



Texas law provides for four types of advance directives. You can create one or more, to meet your particular needs and wishes.

Key things to know:

- Advance directives do not need to be notarized, only witnessed, signed and dated.
- Two witnesses are required. Only one of them may be a family member or caregiver.
- The lack of advance directives will not impact your access to care.
- Having an advance directive will not affect insurance policies or premiums.
- Advance directives executed in another state are valid in Texas.
- If one advance directive conflicts with another, the later document supersedes.
- Advance directives executed before Sept. 1, 1999 are still valid, but are governed by the law in effect when executed.
- You can revoke an advance directive at any time.
- The national Five Wishes program does not meet all of Texas' legal requirements; it is best to document your desires using Texas Forms.

Why Do Hospitals Ask Me if I Have an Advance Directive?

All too often, hospitals see the emotional heartache when families struggle with making what they hope will be the “right” decisions for a loved one. If only the patient had put his/her desires in writing, the family wouldn't have to bear that burden.

Federal law requires hospitals to give adult patients information on advance directives. Be sure to let your family and doctors know if you have an advance directive. For those adult patients admitted without advance directives, hospitals give information on the types of forms and will even help a patient execute documents, if needed. Remember though, it's best to put your wishes in writing before a hospital stay – when you can consider these issues in a relaxed setting.



What are My Options for Advance Directives?

There are four types of advance directives. You can execute one, or several, depending on your needs and situation. Download and complete the Texas forms below in English or Spanish. Share copies with your doctor and your family, and take copies with you to the hospital.

Directive to Physicians and Family or Surrogates ([PDF in English](#) | [PDF in Spanish](#))

- This directive allows you to specify for the provision, withdrawal or withholding of medical care in the event of a terminal or irreversible condition.
- Your condition must be certified by one physician.

Medical Power of Attorney ([PDF in English](#) | [PDF in Spanish](#))

- This directive allows you to designate another person as your agent for making health care decisions if you become incompetent.
- You do not have to have a terminal or irreversible condition for a medical power of attorney to be used.

Out-of-Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate Order ([PDF in English](#) | [Instructions in Spanish](#))

- This directive allows competent adults to refuse certain life-sustaining treatments in non-hospital settings where health care professionals are called to assist, including hospital ERs and outpatient settings.
- You should carry a photocopy of your written form or wear a designated ID bracelet.
- This directive cannot be executed for minors unless a physician states the minor has a terminal or irreversible condition.
- Note: The PDF form in English must be properly executed in accordance with the instructions on the opposite side to be considered a valid form by emergency medical services personnel. (Download Spanish instructions separately.)



Declaration of Mental Health Treatment ([PDF in English](#) | [PDF in Spanish](#))

- This directive allows a court to determine when you become incapacitated, and when that declaration becomes effective.
- You may opt not to consent to electro-convulsive therapy or to the use of psychoactive drugs.
- The declaration expires in three years, unless you are incapacitated at that time.