

Advance Medical Directives 101

What they are & why you need one NOW



You have an accident. You're unconscious. You can't make decisions about your care.

Who will?

If you DON'T have an advance directive...

Legal power falls in this order:

**Guardian
Spouse
Adult children
Parents
Siblings**

None of these? A judge will fill in.

Virginia law decides who makes your medical decisions.

Does your spouse qualify?



Separated from your spouse?



No divorce = that spouse has legal rights over your medical care.

Lived together for ages?



No marriage = no medical care rights. Virginia doesn't recognize common law marriage.

If you DO have an advance directive, you decide:

Sometimes known as a **LIVING WILL**

1. Who makes decisions

Name your agent, the person who can make medical decisions on your behalf if you can't communicate.

This "medical power of attorney" must be at least 18.

You should also name a backup.

Hint: Talk to this person AND carry their contact information with you.

2. What treatments you want

If you become seriously ill, do you want these - when, and for how long?

- CPR
- A ventilator or respirator
- Kidney dialysis
- A feeding tube
- IV fluids
- Antibiotics

Make it Official

Your advance directive becomes legal when you:

- Sign and date it
- Get two witnesses to sign it
- Give your hospital a copy
- Give your doctor a copy



Hint: Give your family members and your hospital copies. Keep the original for yourself and carry it with you.



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