

Q&A: Understanding Advance Directives

As young adults prepare to "fly the nest," there's a crucial conversation that often gets overlooked, and it can make all the difference in a crisis - Who will make medical decisions for that young adult if they can't speak for themselves?

Why Would Young Adults Need an Advance Directive?

An accident or illness can happen to anyone at any age.

Have you or a young adult in your life had a serious car accident, sports injury, served in active duty in the military, experienced an alcohol or drug overdose or a mental health crisis?

Having a legal document called an Advance Directive allows you to name someone who can speak for you when you cannot speak for yourself. This is a security that is easy to put in place. We don't know that we need this until it is too late.

Won't my parents, spouse or next of kin make decisions for me anyway?

For anyone over 18 years old, it is not automatic for a family member to make decisions. The laws vary by state and can delay needs for medical treatment. In some states, like New Hampshire, there is a hierarchy of people who can be chosen as the decision maker for a limited amount of time. It is better to have chosen a person that you trust to make decisions that follow your values before a crisis.

How do I start a conversation with my significant family members or partners?

Use openings such as "I have been thinking," "I recently heard about," "I know it's unlikely, but I'd like to know..."

Don't I need a lawyer to create an Advance Directive?

No, anyone can access the legal forms and have them witnessed free of charge. The info needs to be in your medical file and copies should be given to whomever is named to speak for you.

Give your loved ones the peace of mind of knowing your wishes if you were to have a life-threatening illness and encourage them to do the same for you. Forms can be printed from the NH Advance Care Planning Guide:

https://healthynh.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/04/Advance_Care_Planning_Guide_Revised_FINAL-3.pdf or order booklets from website: www.healthynh.org



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