



ABOUT HEALTH CARE

Advance Directives

WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Official [Advance Directives](#) are legal forms that help make sure your wishes are carried out if you are not able to express them yourself. They let you describe what kind of life-saving treatment you would want and identify who you trust to make decisions for you. Everyone should have an Advance Directive, but they are especially important for people who are elderly or have a life-threatening illness. For certain people in these groups, it may be a good idea to work with your primary care physician to complete a [POLST](#) form.

There are some legal issues surrounding Advance Directives. [Utah's Advance Health Care Directive Form](#) is established in the law, which makes it a good option. A person can create a form that is different from this form, but the law was designed to create a form that would work well for most people.

You do not need a lawyer to complete these forms.

If you need assistance in completing the form, contact your primary care physician, your local hospital, or Utah Legal Services (any Utah resident age 60 or older can call 800-662-1772 between 9 am and 2 pm for assistance).

Good advance planning for health care decisions is a continuing conversation – about values, priorities, the meaning of one's life, and quality of life. Advance Directives are an important step, but it is still important to reflect thoughtfully on your wishes and communicate openly and often with those who may have to make decisions for you.

After you complete an Advance Directive:

1. Keep the original copy of your health care Advance Directive in a place where it can be easily found. Do not lock your directive in a safe deposit box, safe, or other inaccessible

location.

2. Give your health care agent or proxy a copy of the Directive plus any notes. Make sure your agent knows where to find the original.
3. Give your doctor a copy of your Directive. Make certain it is put in your medical record. Make sure your doctor will support your wishes. If your doctor has objections, you need to work them out or find another doctor.
4. If entering a hospital or nursing home, take a copy of your Directive with you and ask that it be placed in your medical record.

You can make a new Advance Directive if your wishes change. To revoke an old Advance Directive, you may destroy the old one, write “revoked” across the old one, write a new one, or tell someone that you want to revoke it. If you tell someone that you want to revoke the Advance Directive, you should do so in the presence of an adult witness who should then sign and date a written statement confirming that you have revoked it. If you change your Advance Directive, it is important to notify everyone who has a copy of your old forms.

Adapted from Utah Commission on Aging Tool Kit for Advance Healthcare Planning (2012).

What's the difference between Advance Directives and POLST?

Advance Directives vs. POLST	
Advance Directives	POLST
For anyone 18 and older	For persons with serious illness and/or limited life expectancy at any age
Instructions for FUTURE treatment	Medical orders for CURRENT treatment
Does not guide Emergency Medical Personnel	Guides actions by Emergency Medical Personnel
Guides inpatient treatment decisions	Guides inpatient treatment decisions
	Only legal mechanism for a Utahn to have a Do Not Attempt Resuscitation-DNR order outside of a licensed health care facility

Adapted from POLST Paradigm.