

What is an “Advance Health Care Directive” and why is it important?

It is often difficult for individuals to think about the care and treatment they want in the event they are incapable of making their own health care decisions. However, completing an Advance Directive is important for all individuals over 18 years of age as they may unexpectedly be in a position where they cannot speak for themselves, such as an accident or severe illness.

When you don't write down your wishes about the kinds of medical treatment you do or don't want to receive and name someone you trust to oversee your care, these important matters can be placed in the hands of estranged family members, doctors, or sometimes even judges, who may know very little about what you would prefer.

An Advance Health Care Directive is a written document signed by a competent person granting someone, usually a spouse, family member, friend or attorney, the authority to make decisions regarding health-care. An individual is allowed to state his or her own decisions on health care matters and to appoint someone to make health-care decisions based on that patient's wishes and intentions.

What purpose does an advance health care directive serve?

An advance health care directive allows a person to plan in advance for medical treatment. A person may state his or her wishes about specific kinds of medical treatment and may name a spouse, relative, friend or attorney as a decision-maker in case the person is unable to make his or her own decisions because of illness, accident or other incapacity.

Where can I get more information about Advance Directives?

There are many places and sites that provide information on advance health care directives. States have different requirements so it is best to check with an attorney. You can find more information at:

- NM State Agency on Aging
- US Department of Veterans Affairs
- NM AdvanceDirectives/NM Avanzadas Directivas
- NM Donor Services
- NM Aging and Long-Term Services
- NM Department of Health
- AARP/Senior Citizen's Centers
- Five Wishes

Five Wishes lets your family and doctors know:

- Who you want to make health care decisions for you when you can't make them.
- The kind of medical treatment you want or don't want.
- How comfortable you want to be.
- How you want people to treat you.
- What you want your loved ones to know.