



Caregiver Resources

Advance Care Planning

Caregiving is easier with planning and trusted decision-making.

What is advance care planning?

[Advance care planning](#) is the process where individuals outline their preferences and values regarding future healthcare decisions, particularly in scenarios where they may not be able to communicate these preferences themselves. Every important person in your life should be informed about your values, goals, and preferences for care.

What is an advance directive?

An advance directive is a legal form that ensures your healthcare preferences are known and honored by doctors and loved ones if you become incapacitated.

The [VA Advance Directive](#) includes sections that allow Veterans to specify their treatment preferences:

- **Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care** – This part allows individuals to designate a trusted person, known as a Health Care Agent, who will make healthcare decisions on their behalf.
- **Living Will** – Allows Veterans to indicate the treatments they would and would not want, such as resuscitation, mechanical ventilation (breathing machine), and feeding tube.

Ask the Veteran's social worker for a VA advance directive form or go to www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-10-0137/ for more information. You can also talk with your social worker if you need help starting a conversation with your loved ones about their wishes or completing advance directives.

What is the Advance Care Planning via Group Visits (ACP-GV) Program?

The [Advance Care Planning via Group Visits \(ACP-GV\)](#) Program provides a supportive environment for caregivers and Veterans to discuss advance care planning together. These group sessions allow participants to share experiences and learn from one another. VA Patient Aligned Care Teams and social workers at your local VA facility can assist with paperwork, while the ACP-GV Program offers group settings for these discussions.

How do I get started?

Begin thinking about the medical treatments and care you would or would not want if you were no longer able to make those decisions. The Values Worksheet on the other side of this handout can help you get started. Encourage the Veteran you care for to do the same.

It is essential to choose a designated Health Care Agent and talk with them about your values and wishes. Both the Veteran and caregiver should complete a personal advance directive and ensure the Veteran completes their VA advance directive.

What do we do with advance directives after I fill it out?

Put the original files in a safe and easy-to-access place. Put a note on the copies about where the originals are kept, and then give copies to the Veteran's health care provider, Health Care Agent, and a family member.

Although advance directives do not expire, it's crucial to review them periodically and update them as needed, considering changes in health, support systems, or medical treatments.

Non-VA Advance Directives

VA accepts state-authorized and Department of Defense advance directives. Your state may also have a separate Mental Health advance directive. If your loved one completes a VA advance directive, a separate mental health advance directive may not be necessary, as mental health preferences can be recorded on the VA advance directive. If you have further questions about these documents, please ask your social worker. To learn more, visit www.va.gov/geriatrics



Values Worksheet for Advance Care Planning

How important are these items to you?	Not Important			Very Important	
Preserve my quality of life	0	1	2	3	4
Be independent	0	1	2	3	4
Be alert and competent	0	1	2	3	4
Be able to relate to family and friends	0	1	2	3	4
Be comfortable and as pain-free as possible	0	1	2	3	4
Leave good memories for family and friends	0	1	2	3	4
Leave money to family, friends, or charity	0	1	2	3	4
Let nature take its course	0	1	2	3	4
Die in a short time rather than lingering	0	1	2	3	4
Live as long as possible, no matter the quality of life	0	1	2	3	4
Stay true to my spiritual beliefs and traditions	0	1	2	3	4
Help with medical research or teaching	0	1	2	3	4
Do you want to take part in making decisions about your care?				Yes	No
Do you always want to know the truth about your condition?				Yes	No
Do you want your finances considered when treatment decisions are being made?				Yes	No
How do you feel about using life-sustaining measures in the face of terminal illness? Do you have strong feelings about certain medical treatments such as mechanical breathing, CPR, feeding tube, kidney dialysis, intensive care, chemo, or radiation therapy?				Yes	No
Would you want to avoid certain treatments only if death were certain?				Yes	No
Would you want certain treatments if used to prolong the dying process?				Yes	No
Would you accept certain treatments to lessen pain?				Yes	No
What will be important to you when you are dying?					
Would you prefer at-home hospice care, or would you prefer to be in a hospital?				Yes	No
Do you want to be an organ donor?				Yes	No

Think about these questions before you prepare your advance directive. They are also good topics to discuss with your loved ones, health care providers, and spokesperson. This form must be printed.