



## **Starting the Conversation: Advanced Care Planning Handout**

Planning ahead of time lets you to make your health care wishes known. You may choose someone you trust to make medical decisions for you if you are not able to make them. An advanced directive is a tool to document your wishes.

### **Benefits of Advanced Care Planning**

- Allows you to have a voice in your medical care when you cannot speak for yourself.
- Family members will not be troubled by being not sure of what you want medically.
- Worried family members will have less concern and can be there to help you and each other.
- Talking about your health care wants and wishes will improve your relationships.

## **Types of Advanced Directives**

### **Living Will**

This lets the medical team, your family and loved ones know what health care you want, when, and for how long.

### **Health Care Proxy/Health Care Agent**

This is also known as a Medical Power of Attorney. This names a person you choose to make decisions about your healthcare if you cannot say your wishes. Choose someone you trust. It may be a family member or close friend who understands your wishes. It is best to choose someone who will speak up for you about your wishes, when others may be unhappy about your wishes.

### **Understand the documents and your decisions**

- Talk to your doctors so you know what health treatments keep a person alive when their body cannot live on its own. Points to talk about are medical breathing, eating, drinking and pain.



- Think about your values and decisions. What kinds of treatments would you want? Under what conditions would you want these treatment measures? What are your values and views about what makes a life worth living? How do your beliefs and spiritual values contribute to your choices?

### **Complete Advance Directive Checklist**

- Let your family and loved ones know who you chose as your healthcare agent and explain why.
- Once the Advance Directive is complete, make several copies; provide a copy to each of your medical providers and to those closest to you. Make sure your Healthcare Agent has a copy.
- Make sure that someone knows where to find a copy of your Advance Directive within your home.

Many web pages offer details on advanced directives, such as forms for each state. For more details, ask your medical providers. A VA social worker are also great resources.