

Choosing an Agent

ROLE OF AGENT:

An agent selected by you has the authority to make any and all decisions you would make if you were able. This includes:

- choosing your doctor/other healthcare provider and where you will receive your care
- speaking with your health care team on your condition and treatment options
- reviewing the medical record and authorizing its release when needed
- accepting or refusing all medical treatments, including artificial nutrition and hydration and resuscitation attempts
- consenting to tissue and organ donation, authorizing an autopsy and arranging for disposition of the remains after death

You should instruct your agent on these matters so he/she knows how to decide for you. The more you tell your agent, the better he/she will be able to make decisions on your behalf.

SELECTING YOUR AGENT:

In choosing an agent, consider if he/she:

- is legally able to serve as your agent (must be 18 years old; may not be a health care provider or her/his employee, unless this person is your spouse or close relative)
- will be available when needed
- is willing to speak on your behalf
- knows you well and understands your values and beliefs
- will be comfortable asking questions of your health care team, particularly around issues such as treatment options
- will do her/his best to make the medical care decisions that you would make (whether or not he/she agrees with you)
- will be able to “stand up” for you, be your advocate and handle conflict with others who might disagree with your wishes
- can make difficult decisions under stress

ADDITIONAL INFO:

- It is helpful to select at least one alternate agent, since your primary agent may be unreachable or unavailable (e.g., involved in a car accident with you).
- Talk with your agent about your wishes and give her/him a copy of your advance directive.
- To avoid confusion, tell your loved ones whom you selected as your agent(s).
- If circumstances change, you may select a new agent at any time. Make sure to give your new agent a copy of the revised advance directive, and tell family and friends of the change.