



Isn't It Time We Talk?

Introduction

We all plan ahead for expected events such as vacations, a birth or a wedding, or even a trip to the grocery store. Did you know it is just as important to plan ahead for the health care you want in the future and at the end of life?

The goal of Advance Care Planning (ACP) is for you to live in a way that is meaningful to you, for as long as you live.

It involves making your wishes known to those who care about you through conversation and a written plan.

Planning ahead – now, while you are able – is a gift you can give to yourself and your loved ones. Your decisions should be based on your wishes, values, and beliefs. It does not mean that they need to be made alone.

Now is the time to talk.

For more information:

These websites provide additional resources and information on NC advance directives (including the legal forms) to help guide you through the advance care planning process.

- **The Carolinas Center:** <http://cchospice.org/ittwt/>
- **SC Hospital Association:** <https://www.scha.org/advance-care-planning>
- **SC Bar Association:** <https://www.scbar.org/public/get-legal-help/free-forms-and-publications/>
- **SC Coalition for the Care of the Seriously Ill:** <https://www.sc-post.org/scc-csi>



Planning Ahead for Future Health Care Decisions



*"I have an advance directive, not because I have a serious illness, but because I have a family."
– Ira Byock, MD*

"It always seems too early, until it's too late."

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance Care Planning involves 4 steps to make decisions about the care and treatment you want as your health changes and at the end of life:

[1] Understand future health choices

- These choices may be about specific treatments for an illness, where you would want to receive care – whether at home or in an assisted living or long-term care facility, and considerations about organ donation.
- Decisions like these are best made before there is a health crisis. Talk with your doctor, faith leader, legal advisor, and loved ones.

[2] Think about your choices in light of what is important to you

- What worries, if any, do you have about your health now? What kind of care would you want if your life changed because of illness or injury?
- Think about what you value most about your life. What does it mean for you to “live well?”
- What religious or spiritual beliefs give you support and guidance?

[3] Talk about your decisions with your loved ones and your doctors

- Without these conversations, your health care providers and family would not know what you want if a health care crisis were to occur. This might result in uncertainty, anxiety, or disagreement among loved ones.
- To start the conversation, try using a book or a movie as a chance to bring up the subject. Or refer to a situation that your family would know, like the experience of a friend or a celebrity.

[4] Put your plans into writing so they will be ready if they are needed

- NC law provides for several documents called “advance directives” which will help you make your wishes known.
- A **Health Care Power of Attorney** allows you to designate someone who will make health care decisions for you if you are ever unable to communicate. This is the form most attorneys recommend.
- A **Living Will (Declaration of Desire for a Natural Death)** allows you to express choices about your care, but only if you’re terminally ill or permanently unconscious.
- The **EMS-DNR (Do-Not-Resuscitate)** order can only be obtained from your physician. It prohibits emergency personnel from using resuscitative measures, such as CPR or ventilation, if you are terminally ill and don’t want them.



Things to Consider:

No matter what the state of your present health, a change such as an accident or illness could occur. Having preparations in place for such an event will give you and your family peace of mind.

Advance care planning is not a single conversation, or a one-time signing of forms, but **an ongoing discussion**.

- You can ALWAYS change your mind, even after you put plans into writing.
- You should review your plans from time to time, to make sure they still express your wishes as your situation changes.

All NC advance directives are free of cost and available from your physician or from websites on the back of this brochure.

- If / when you complete (or update) these documents, make sure you give your doctors a copy AND discuss your wishes with them.

By reading this, you have already started the process of advance care planning. Talking about your thoughts and choices is the most important step, but don’t feel pressured to start that before you are ready. Remember, this is an ongoing process!