

Advance Care Planning After Cancer Treatment



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Entering survivorship offers a good opportunity to review your healthcare documents. During treatment, your beliefs, values, and wishes for end-of-life care might have changed. This handout will explain the details of advance care planning. It also lists forms that are available to document your wishes.

What is advance care planning?

Advance care planning allows you to share your wishes with your loved ones and care providers. This gives you the peace of mind that your wishes will be respected if you are unable to speak for yourself. It also helps ease anxiety for your loved ones who will be making important decisions about your care.

Advance care planning includes:

- Learning about *life-sustaining treatments*. These treatments include giving nutrition and fluids, using a *ventilator* (breathing machine), resuscitation, surgery, and more.
- Talking with your loved ones about your personal values and spiritual beliefs about death and dying.
- Deciding who you would want to speak for you and make decisions about your care if you cannot do so for yourself.
- Deciding what medical treatments you would want if you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself.
- Preparing legal documents for your end-of-life preferences and giving copies to healthcare providers.

What forms do I need?

Some important forms involved in advance planning are listed below.

- **Living Will:** This legal form explains your desires for medical treatment if you cannot speak for yourself. Give copies of this form to your family members and to each of your healthcare providers. A living will does **not** need to be notarized in Washington state. Ask your social worker for a blank form.

- **Medical Power of Attorney:** This legal form allows you to appoint a trusted person to make medical decisions for you if you cannot make them for yourself. This person should know your wishes and be willing to accept this role. This form does not need to be notarized in Washington state. Ask your social worker for a blank form.
- **Financial/Durable Power of Attorney:** You can name a trusted person to be your financial/durable power of attorney. This person has the right to make financial decisions on your behalf when you cannot make them for yourself. If you have more than one bank account, you will need to give a copy of this form to each bank or financial institution. This form does need to be notarized in Washington state. Ask your social worker for a blank form.
- **Will:** A will is a legal document that tells what you want done with your property, money, and other possessions after death. It also describes a plan for your children's care, if needed. If you do not have a written will, the laws of the state can decide how your money and children are passed along to family members. Many people hire a lawyer to help them write their will, but you can also find outlines online. **A will needs to be notarized.**
- **POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment):** This form states the treatment that you want in case you become seriously ill. Washington state law requires that all healthcare providers follow these orders when providing your care. This care may be in a hospital, nursing home, assisted living facility, your own home, or given by paramedics. You and your provider fill out a POLST form based on your goals of care. Both of you must sign the form. This form does not replace other advance directives. You will still need those forms if you want to name a legal representative who can make healthcare decisions for you.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Please contact your primary care provider who can help answer your questions or concerns.