

“Why do I need an Advance Directive?”

My spouse or children will make decisions if I am unable.

Indiana law does not give priority to the spouse or children. Instead, decisions can be made by any family member. This could lead to further stress or conflict at an already difficult time. Give your family a priceless gift — your advance directive removes the burden of decision making by clearly expressing your health care wishes.

I am young and healthy; I don't need an advance directive.

Advance directives are for *all* adults. An accident or sudden illness could happen at any age and leave you with no chance to make your own health care decisions.



I realize I'm aging, but I don't want to think or talk about death.

Death is a natural part of life. Avoiding the topic won't prevent it from happening. Medical advances make it possible to prolong life; thus, end of life decisions are now more challenging. Planning for death and documenting your wishes in an advance directive is the best way to impact how your final days are spent.

My family becomes upset when I mention death — or any type of planning for the end of my life.

Your family loves you and can't imagine life without you; yet avoiding decisions will not prevent your loved ones from hurting. So be firm and straightforward in discussing advance directives with your family. Also, your doctor, attorney, pastor, or a St. Mary's chaplain can help with these family discussions.

Have You Told Your Family or Loved Ones Your Wishes?

End of Life health care decisions can be difficult to make, for they reflect one's most cherished beliefs and values. As you prepare for the end of life, it is important to ask yourself, “Would I want aggressive, life-sustaining treatments?”

Making Decisions About:

Life Support Systems... People think of life support systems as machines that keep you alive, such as a ventilator that breathes for you. However, a life support system can be as simple as an intravenous solution (IV) that delivers nourishment, or medications that maintain blood pressure.

Life support systems are used every day to help people overcome an illness. Unfortunately, there are times when life support systems are only prolonging life, delaying the inevitability of death.

Resuscitation... *Code Blue* is a potentially lifesaving set of procedures carried out on a person whose heart and/or lungs have suddenly stopped functioning.

There are situations where resuscitation is appropriate to assist with a sudden, sometimes unexpected episode that may be corrected with quick, proper medical assistance.

Yet in other situations, resuscitation is usually not appropriate. For example, at the end of a terminal illness — when resuscitation or lifesaving measures would be of no benefit to the patient and only prevent a natural death — the patient or family may not want lifesaving measures performed. Since the decision to *allow natural death* is a physician order, these types of decisions are made in consultation with the physician.

“I have completed my Advance Directive. What should I do with it?”

Keep the original where it can be easily found, and be sure your health care representative knows where it is. Give copies to:

- Your representative and any alternates.
- Your primary care physician and any other doctors who care for you.
- Your adult children and significant others.
- Also, keep a card in your wallet that states you have an advance directive, including the name of your health care representative.
- If your attorney did not prepare your advance directive, provide your attorney with a copy.

**If you have questions or need assistance with an Advance Directive, contact:
Pastoral Care Department**

**Phone: (812) 485-4150
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. M – F
Pager: (812) 429-4065**

Advance Directives

Making Decisions

About Your Health Care

St. Mary's believes the inherent dignity of each person is based on being created in God's image. We are committed to respecting your wishes regarding your health.



**3700 Washington Avenue
Evansville, IN 47750**

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Make your wishes known — it is your right, it is your health, it is your life!

What is an Advance Directive?



Formal advance directives are legal documents that state your desires should you lose the ability to make your own health care decisions.

Advance directives include:

Living Will — A document that states your wishes about life-sustaining treatments in the event you have a terminal condition *and* are unable to make your own medical decisions. A Living Will must be witnessed by 2 adults, excluding your spouse, parent, or child; any heir to your estate; or anyone responsible for providing or paying for your medical care.

Appointment of Health Care Representative — A document that specifies the person you want to make health care decisions when you are unable to make them for yourself. This authority is effective when your doctor determines you are not capable of making your own decisions. Your representative's authority ends when you regain the ability to make decisions, or at death. Your Appointment of Health Care Representative can not be witnessed by the person designated as your health care representative.

Health Care Power of Attorney — The appointment of a person to act as your legal agent for making health care decisions. Since a Health Care Power of Attorney takes precedence over a living will, it is necessary that the person you appoint knows and agrees with your desires.

Once I choose a health care power of attorney or representative, I will no longer be able to make my own decisions.

Not true!

You always retain the right to make your own health care decisions unless you are determined by medical experts to lack the capacity to do so. However, should you become unable to make your own decisions, your advance directive will guide your family and health care team.

Once I have an advance directive, I won't receive any treatment or care.

Not true!

Basic treatment and care will always be provided for your comfort and dignity, even if you don't want life-prolonging technology.

Once I have an advance directive, I won't be able to change my mind.

Not true!

You can change your directive at any time. In fact, you should look to see if changes are needed whenever significant life events occur such as the death of your designated health care representative.

What Are My Rights?

You have the legal right to make your own health care decisions based on your values and beliefs.

Weighing the potential benefits versus burden of treatment has long been a moral right based on human dignity.

Advance directives protect your rights in the event you become unable to make decisions for yourself. St. Mary's will honor your advance directives unless they conflict with state and federal law and/or the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services.

"How do I select a Health Care Representative?"

Choose someone you trust with your life!

In choosing someone to speak for you in a medical crisis, ask yourself, does this person:

- Meet the legal requirements, such as age?
- Live close to you or will they be able to travel?
- Know you well and understand what is important to you?
- Have the ability to discuss end of life issues, to listen to your wishes, and be able to honor your wishes — even if they do not agree with your wishes?
- Have the ability to be a strong advocate in case of conflicts among your family, friends, or medical personnel?

