

**FAMILY CARE PLAN**

**STEP 2 OF 3**

# A Written Plan of Care

A ROADMAP FOR  
INSTRUCTING YOUR FAMILY  
ON HOW TO HANDLE YOUR  
LONG-TERM IMPAIRMENT



Long Term Care  
*Family*



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## INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon to hear stories about families feeling deeply conflicted or even being torn apart over decisions for their loved ones at the end of life. Many people assume their loved ones know what they would want. However, research suggests that this is not always true. When participants in a research study were asked to predict which end-of-life decisions their loved one would make, they guessed nearly one in three decisions incorrectly.



## CHAPTER 1

# What Is Advance Care Planning?

**A**dvance care planning involves discussing and preparing for future decisions about your medical care if you become seriously ill or unable to communicate your wishes. Having meaningful conversations with your loved ones is the most important part of advance care planning.

People of all ages can benefit from **advance care planning** because a serious illness or severe injury can strike at any time. As we get older, it's also common to need more help making decisions about health care. One study found that half of all adults age 65 or older who are admitted to a hospital had someone else involved in making their medical decisions. Having your documents in place and discussing your values with loved ones can help them make decisions that align with your preferences.

# What Happens if I Do Not Have an Advance Directive?

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If you do not have an advance directive and you are unable to make decisions on your own, the state laws where you live will determine who may make medical decisions on your behalf. This is typically your spouse, your parents if they are available, or your children if they are adults. If you are unmarried and have not named your partner as your proxy, it's possible they would be excluded from decision-making. If you have no family members, some states allow a close friend who is familiar with your values to help. Or they may assign a physician to represent your best interests.

It is impossible to predict the future. You may never face a medical situation in which you are unable to communicate your wishes. Still, having an advance directive can provide you and those close to you with some peace of mind. Remember that an advance directive is only used if you are unable to make decisions on your own.

## Will an Advance Directive Guarantee My Wishes Are Followed?

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An advance directive is legally recognized but not legally binding. This means that your health care provider and proxy will do their best to respect your advance directive, but there may be circumstances in which they cannot follow your wishes exactly. For example, you may be in a complex medical situation where it is unclear what exactly you would want. This is a key reason why having conversations about advance care planning is so important. Open, honest discussion can help your loved ones understand your values and preferences and better navigate unanticipated issues.

In some emergency situations, it may not be possible for the health care team to know your wishes before delivering care. For example, if you have a sudden heart



## CHAPTER 2

# How Do I Prepare a Living Will?

**C**reating your **living will** or **durable power of attorney** for health care can help you reflect and make decisions about what matters most at the end of life. Many people begin the process by thinking about their values and wishes. For example, if your heart stops or you have trouble breathing, would you want to undergo lifesaving measures if it meant that, in the future, you could be well enough to spend time with your family? For some people, staying alive as long as medically possible, or long enough to experience an important family event, is the most important goal. Advance directives can help make that possible. Other individuals have a clear idea about when they would no longer want to prolong their lives. Advance directives can help with that, too.

A photograph of two men in a room. One man, older with grey hair, is seen from the side, wearing a blue checkered shirt. The other man, younger with dark curly hair, is looking towards the older man, wearing a brown sweater. The background is a bright, indoor setting with a window and a whiteboard.

## CHAPTER 3

# How Do I Choose My Health Care Proxy?

**Y**ou can choose a person to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to communicate them yourself due to a serious illness or injury.

This person is called a health care proxy. Some important things to know:

- Your proxy will work with your health care team to ensure your care and treatment preferences are followed.
- It's okay to change your health care proxy. Fill out a new proxy form and let your family and health care team know about the change.
- You may name an **alternate proxy** if your proxy is unavailable.

You can choose a proxy in addition to or instead of having a living will.

Having a health care proxy can help you plan for unexpected situations.

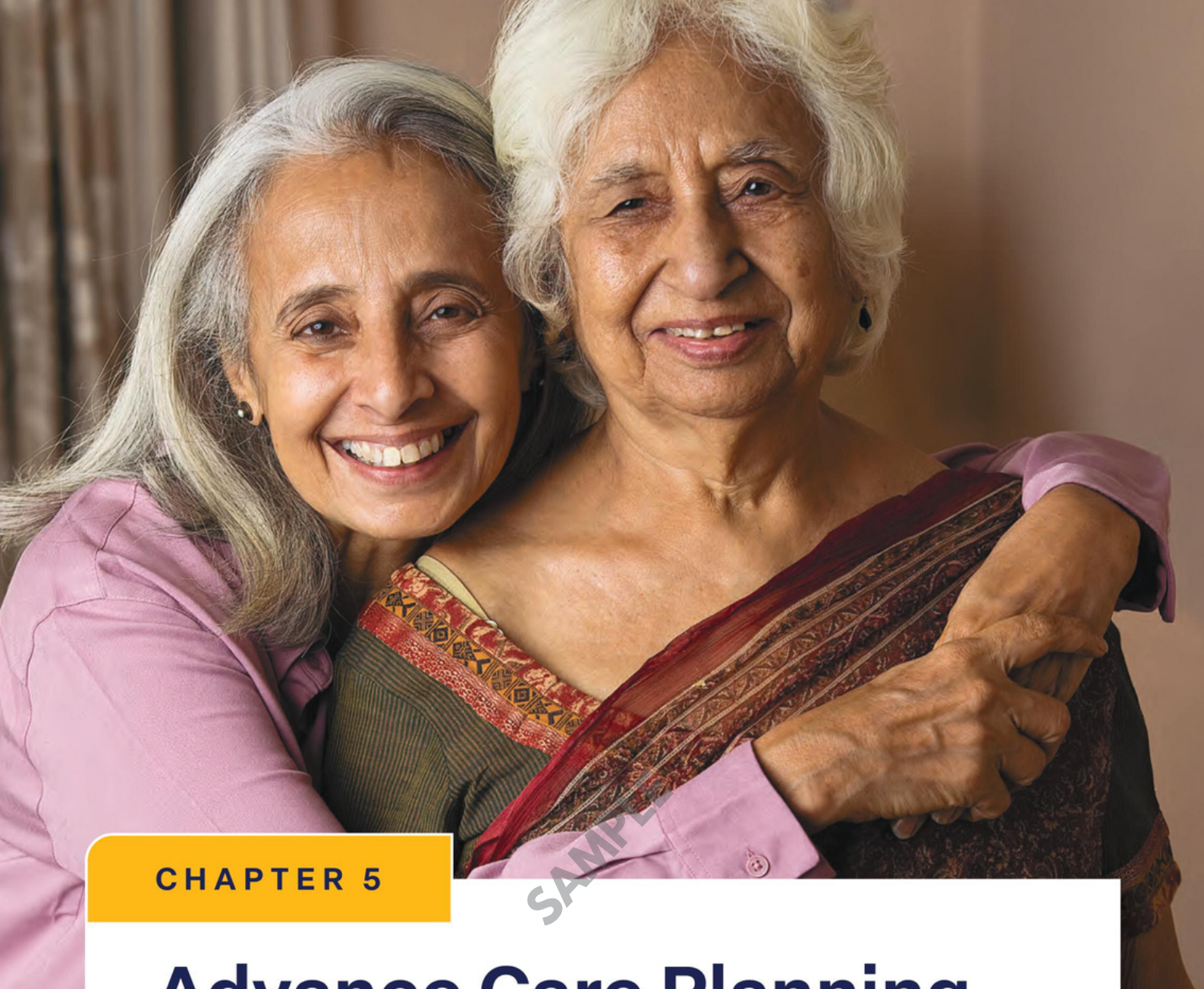
A photograph of two women walking outdoors in a park-like setting. The woman on the left has short, wavy brown hair and is wearing a light grey button-down shirt. The woman on the right has dark hair pulled back and is wearing a white long-sleeved top. They are both smiling and looking towards the right. The background is filled with green trees and foliage.

## CHAPTER 4

# How To Make Your Advance Directives Official

**T**o make your decisions about care and treatment official, you can complete a living will. Similarly, once you decide on your health care proxy, you can make it official by completing a durable power of attorney for health care. The living will and durable power of attorney for health care forms are commonly part of the advance directive forms available for free in most states.

Some people might not feel comfortable putting their wishes in writing. If completing these legal documents is not the right choice for you, that's okay. The most important part of advance care planning is to have conversations with your loved ones about what matters to you.



## CHAPTER 5

# Advance Care Planning for Caregivers and Family Members

**A**s a family member or caregiver, knowing what matters most to your loved one can help you honor their wishes and give you peace of mind if they become too sick to make decisions. Starting the conversation about advance care planning can help you understand their preferences and more easily navigate future medical decisions.



## CHAPTER 6

# Plan for Other Decisions

**Y**ou might also want to prepare for other possible decisions as you age. This may include considerations around long-term care and future health care, making estate and financial plans, planning for a funeral or memorial service, and deciding on a burial or cremation. In this section, you can learn more about each of these decisions.

# Advance Directive Wallet Card

You might want to make a card to carry in your wallet indicating that you have an advance directive and where it is kept. Here is an example of the wallet card offered by the American Hospital Association. You might consider copying this, filing it out, and carrying it with you. A PDF can be found at [www.aha.org/putitinwriting](http://www.aha.org/putitinwriting).

<b>Advance Directive NOTIFICATION</b>	
Print name	Signature
<input type="checkbox"/> I have a health care power of attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> I have an advance directive
I have talked with my family and my doctor about the care I want. If I am unable to speak for myself, please contact:	
Name	Number
<i>(Additional names on back)</i>	

Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number

***Your life. Your terms.***

For more information visit:  
***www.aha.org/putitinwriting***

SAMPLE

# Think About What Matters Most When Making Medical Decisions

What matters most to you and makes your life meaningful may affect the kind of medical care you would want. For some people, staying alive as long as medically possible, or long enough to see an important event like a grandchild's birth, is the most important thing. Advance care planning can help make that possible. The questions below can help you think through what you might want. You can pick and choose which ones you want to respond to or discuss with your loved ones.

## **Would you rather live as long as possible or focus on quality of life?**

*For example, is it more important to live longer or would you rather focus on being able to function physically or mentally even if you may not live as long? Is there a point in life where you would not want to keep living?*

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## **If you are seriously ill or nearing the end of life, how much medical treatment would you feel was right for you?**

*For example, would you want to try every available treatment even if it's uncomfortable or painful, or would you want to avoid treatments that may impact your quality of life?*

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## **Who do you trust to make decisions about your care?**

*For example, would you like to leave decisions up to your health care provider or a member of your family or community?*

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# Care and Treatment Decisions: What Would You Choose?

Sometimes thinking through different situations can help you make decisions about your care and treatment preferences. Consider the situations below and write down your thoughts or discuss them with a loved one. Remember: You may feel differently as time goes on.

**If an illness leaves you paralyzed or in a permanent coma and you need to be on a ventilator, would you want that?**

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**If your heart stops or you have trouble breathing, would you want to undergo lifesaving measures if it meant that, in the future, you could be well enough to spend time with your family?**

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**If a stroke leaves you unable to move and then your heart stops, would you want to be given CPR? If the stroke also affected your thinking, does that change your decision?**

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**What if you are in pain at the end of life? Do you want medication to treat the pain, even if it will make you drowsy and tired?**

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# Health Care Providers To Involve in Advance Care Planning

<b>What is the name of your health care provider?</b>	
<b>What is their phone number?</b>	
<b>What do you see them for?</b> (Regular checkups and when you are sick, diabetes, dementia, heart disease, kidney disease, etc.)	
<b>When is your next appointment?</b>	
<b>Have you shared your advance directive with this health care provider?</b>	

SAMPLE

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# Tips for Talking With Your Doctor About Advance Care Planning

Talking with a doctor about advance care planning is covered by Medicare as part of your annual wellness visit. If you have private health insurance, check with your insurance provider. When you are ready to talk to your doctor, these tips and conversation starters can help you make the most out of your visit. You will also find examples of questions you might ask during your appointment. You may decide that not all the questions are important to you. Or you may not be ready to talk about all of these things right now. That's okay. The important thing is to start the conversation.

## Before Your Visit

You can prepare for your visit by writing down some of your current health issues and your questions about future health care and end-of-life care. Remember, the goal is simply to start the conversation. You do not have to make specific decisions about your medical care until you feel ready.

**How would you describe your current health? What illnesses or conditions do you have right now?**

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**What concerns or questions do you have about your future health or health care?**

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# Who Should I Choose as My Health Care Proxy?

It's important to think carefully about the person you choose to be your health care proxy and ensure they will be able to honor your wishes. This worksheet can help you consider who may be a good fit. Write down each person's name and answer the questions below.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Am I comfortable talking with this person about my wishes and priorities for health care? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
2. Will this person honor my wishes, and do as I ask when the time comes? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do I trust this person with my life? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. Can this person handle conflicting opinions from my family, friends, and health care providers? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is this person comfortable asking questions of doctors, insurance companies, and other busy providers and will this person stand up for me? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
6. Does this person live near me or would they travel to be with me if needed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_



Long Term Care  
*Family*

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# WE ARE HERE TO HELP

**We know firsthand that sudden challenges can arise when a family member is afflicted with a chronic mental illness or physical disability. Long-Term Care Family was created by people who have personally experienced these challenges.**

**The Family Care Plan helps alleviate the emotional, physical, and financial challenges that derive from these conditions.**

**With it, you and your loved ones can be well-prepared to handle most of what life throws your way, so you can focus on what's truly important – building relationships, exchanging laughter, and cherishing love.**

## CONTACT US TODAY TO GET STARTED



OR

