

# It's about the conversation

“Who will speak for me when I cannot speak for myself? How can I make sure my goals, values and beliefs about my health care are followed?”

Many of us believe that only the sick or dying need to think about these things. However, these are questions we all must ask and be able to answer.

Whether we are young or old, sick or healthy, these are important questions for us. The conversations are often difficult to have, but they are very important.

In our Cancer Center, our goal is to help all patients and family members with this conversation. We can help you capture your wishes in a written document called a health care directive.

## What is advance care planning?

It is a guided conversation about future healthcare decisions. If you had a sudden event, like a car accident or illness, you might not be able to make your own decisions. A person close to you would need to make choices for you. We call this person a healthcare agent.

## Who should have an advance care plan?

Anyone who is 18 and older needs to start advance care planning. No one knows when we might have a car accident or a sudden health emergency.

That's why all adults should discuss their health care wishes with their families and others they trust. Advance care planning and completing a health care directive is a wise choice for all adults.

What is the difference between advance care planning and a health care directive?

**Advance care planning** is a conversation between loved ones about care at the end of your life. It gives you a chance to state your wishes about your care. You can tell your loved ones what is most important to you about quality of life and living.

There is no “right” or “wrong” in advance care planning. Your decisions and values are simply what kind of care you prefer at the end of your life.

**A health care directive** is a written document that explains what care would look like if you could not make health decisions for yourself. In it, you appoint someone to make health care decisions for you. This document is an important part of your medical record.

## What is the role of a health care agent?

A health care agent is someone you trust to speak for you in a medical emergency.

You need to have in-depth conversations with your agent about your wishes. Your agent will then understand your wishes in case of an emergency. The name and contact information for your health care agent is part of your health care directive.

We are here to guide you in this process. During your visits here in the Cancer Center we will help you schedule an appointment with one of our trained Advance Care Planning staff.

