

Advance Directives, DNR, and MOLST

Decision making at the end of life is difficult for patients, families and health care providers. Since the early 1990s, a number of forms have been developed to help people express their wishes in advance.

What are "advance directives"? Advance directives are documents that can help you remain in charge of your health care even after you can no longer make decisions for yourself. The two most common forms of written advance directives are the living will and durable power of attorney for healthcare. Some people seek an attorney's services to complete these documents; however this is not required. You can complete these documents yourself and have them either notarized or witnessed by two people who are over 18 and not related to you by blood or marriage.

What is a "living will"? A living will is a document that tells your doctor how you want to be treated *if when you are determined to be terminally ill or permanently unconscious and you cannot make decisions for yourself*. You can use a living will if you want to avoid life-prolonging treatments such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), kidney dialysis or breathing machines. You can use your living will to tell your doctor that you just want to be pain free at the end of our life. In Ohio, the living will is sometimes called a "declaration". A living will form can be obtained from attorneys, community organizations, and healthcare facilities. This signed form must be notarized or witnessed.

What is a "durable power of attorney for healthcare"? A medical power of attorney (medical POA) is another type of advance directive that allows you to name a person to make health care decisions for you if and when you become unable to make them for yourself. The person you name to make decisions on your behalf is some times called your health care surrogate, agent, proxy or attorney-in-fact. The person who holds your medical POA can respond to medical situations you might not have anticipated and make decisions for you empowered by knowledge of your values and wishes. The medical POA form can be obtained from attorneys, community organizations, and healthcare facilities. This signed form must be notarized or witnessed. The medical POA document is different from the power of attorney form that authorizes someone to make financial transactions for you.

What is cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)? CPR is a technique useful in many emergencies, including heart attack or near drowning, in which someone's breathing or heartbeat has stopped. CPR may include chest compression, mouth-to-mouth or other rescue breathing and/or electric shock.

What is a DNR -Comfort Care form (a.k.a. DNRCC)? DNR means do not resuscitate. A DNR is a medical order given by a physician or other legally authorized prescriber. It addresses the various methods used to revive people whose hearts have stopped beating /or who have stopped breathing. If a person has a DNRCC order, he will receive care that eases pain and suffering but no cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to save or prolong life. The DNRCC becomes active as soon as it is signed by the doctor or advanced practice nurse. The DNRCC is a standard form which can be obtained from the Ohio Department of Health or healthcare facilities.

What is DNR Comfort Care - Arrest (a.k.a. DNRCC - Arrest)? The DNRCC - Arrest is similar to the DNRCC but it only becomes active if and when the person has a cardiac and/or respiratory arrest (i.e. the person stops breathing or his heart stops beating). The DNRCC - Arrest is a standard form which can be obtained from the Ohio Department of Health or healthcare facilities.

What is a MOLST? MOLST stands for Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment. A MOLST is a medical order which specifies different treatment options for individuals who are seriously ill or frail and elderly. The MOLST allows patients or their surrogate to discuss care options they do and do not want to receive at the end of life, and then have their physician or other prescriber convey them into orders. This form would be available through Ohio Department of Health and healthcare facilities.

	Living Will	Power of Attorney for Healthcare	DNR-Comfort Care	DNR-Comfort Care Arrest	MOLST
<i>What is it?</i>	Advance Directive	Advance Directive	Medical order	Medical order	Medical order
<i>How is it used?</i>	General statement of preferences when a person becomes terminally ill and cannot make decisions on their own	Identifies a decision-maker when an individual can no longer make decisions on their own	Provides information to the healthcare team about CPR	Provides information to the healthcare team about CPR	Provides information to the healthcare team about CPR and other treatments
<i>Is this form voluntary?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Can the patient change or revoke the form?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>What instruction does this give the health care team?</i>	The living will gives general direction about care decisions. It does not provide specific instructions for emergency medical personnel.	A medical power of attorney must make decisions based on previously expressed wishes of the patient or in the patient's best interests.	Gives emergency personnel and other healthcare providers direction about CPR.	Gives emergency personnel and other healthcare providers direction about CPR.	Provides all healthcare providers with instructions on a wide range of treatment options - not just CPR.
<i>When does it go in to effect?</i>	When an individual is permanently unconscious or terminally ill and unable to communicate	When an individual is unable to communicate for themselves	When the order is written by a physician or advanced practice nurse	<i>Only</i> when the person suffers a cardiac or respiratory arrest	When the order is written by a physician, advanced practice nurse, or physician assistant

<i>For whom is this document intended?</i>	Any adult	Any adult	Persons with medical conditions who do not wish to have CPR or for whom CPR is not medically reasonable	Persons with medical conditions who do not wish to have CPR but want other aggressive treatments until their heart stops beating or they stop breathing	Seriously or terminally ill adults or children who want to express their wishes about a variety of treatments
<i>How is the form initially obtained?</i>	Widely available from Internet, community organizations, attorneys, health care providers	Widely available from Internet, community organizations, attorneys, health care providers	Ohio Department of Health Website, healthcare providers	Ohio Department of Health Website, healthcare providers	Plan to make available from Ohio Department of Health website and from healthcare providers
<i>Does this document facilitate meaningful discussion between a person and a healthcare provider?</i>	This document records general wishes. It may be written without consultation with a health care professional.	This document identifies a decision maker. It may or may not include specific wishes about treatment.	The DNRCC and DNRCC-Arrest have proven confusing to patients and healthcare providers and has often resulted in unwanted aggressive treatment as well as the withholding of appropriate and desired treatments.	The DNRCC and DNRCC-Arrest have proven confusing to patients and healthcare providers and has often resulted in unwanted aggressive treatment as well as the withholding of appropriate and desired treatments.	MOLST forms offer the opportunity to choose among numerous treatment options from full aggressive treatments to limited treatments. It can provide the framework for discussion with one's physician or other prescriber. The form is simple to complete. It requires the patient's or surrogate's signature, as well as the physician's or other prescriber's signature.