

A Simple Step: Protecting Your Care Choices

A Cross-Continuum Push for Healthcare Decision-Making

Background: As providers grapple with significant capacity constraints, it is an opportune time to promote the importance of healthcare planning throughout one's life. Healthcare associations representing a range of providers and care settings are coming together to share resources that organizations can use to promote proactive healthcare decision-making among their patient populations – particularly around the designation of a health care agent and completion of a health care proxy document. Ultimately, this honors the patient's care wishes and can help avoid some of the challenges that slow the flow of patients through the care continuum and tie up care beds for others in need of acute care.

Help spread the word! Our coalition is asking healthcare organizations and their providers to join us in sharing this messaging and these resources through their channels.

You can refer to this toolkit of materials to get started:

- › [Messaging](#)
- › [Informational Materials](#)
- › [Graphics](#) & [Suggested Copy](#)

GENERAL POINTS:

- Our healthcare system is being stretched like never before. Leaders and advocates are sharing the small actions that community members can take to protect their care and to support their local healthcare providers.
- **Designating a health care agent is an essential piece of the puzzle, and it's a simple action that you can take today.**
- The pandemic – and the resulting crisis being seen today – have shown the importance of documenting what should happen if you are unable to make care decisions for yourself.
 - The same goes for your loved ones, especially those who are older or who have health challenges.
- Designating an agent is not only essential for the dignity of patients and families; it also helps relieve pressure from healthcare organizations and the professionals delivering their care.

GETTING STARTED:

Everyone can have a conversation and take action to make their own personal care plan. **A good place to start is by completing a health care proxy – a document that assigns a trusted someone to make decisions on an individual's behalf if they are unable to themselves. That person is known as a health care agent. It's easy and quick to do.**

Encourage people to ask: if you get sick and cannot make healthcare decisions yourself – even for a short time:



Who would you choose as your health care agent?

What would you tell your agent about the kind of care you want?

Here's how the process works:

1. Choose someone you trust to be your designated health care agent and have a simple conversation about what's important to you.
2. Complete a health care proxy form – you can do it all yourself!
 - Individuals can fill out the Honoring Choices MA [form](#), available in [15 languages](#).
3. Have a simple conversation with your providers to get good care that's right for you.

ADDITIONAL STEPS:

Once a proxy is completed, patients can take the following steps:

- Complete a personal directive (a living will). During the initial drafting, encourage individuals to ask the following:



What matters to me when it comes to my personal care?

What do you want others to know and do for you?

- Talk about their care plan with their care providers. [“Start a Simple Conversation to Stay Well”](#) is a handy guide for talking with your care providers to get quality, individualized care.
- Encourage individuals to use the [Next Steps Tool Kit](#). This resource is intended to build on important conversations and update/ manage individuals' health plan based on their needs, particularly those living with chronic illness.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Below are additional resources that help guide the process of making a personal care plan.

- Short video: [“How to Complete your Proxy Form”](#)
- [“I Have a Health Care Proxy” wallet card](#) for medical emergencies