

My Care: My Choice

Understanding your advance planning choices can be overwhelming.

Honoring Choices MA is a helpful, free online resource for individuals and their loved ones to begin to make decisions about the kind of care they choose for themselves. Honoring Choices MA is a consumer focused non-profit organization supporting the right of every adult to direct their health care choices for quality care today and everyday all through their lives. For complete resources, please visit www.honoringchoicesmass.com.

What's in your plan?

Take the time to talk with your family and other loved ones about your care choices. There are five Massachusetts planning documents you may want to consider. A great place to start is by appointing a Health Care Agent in a Health Care Proxy, and giving your Agent instructions for your care in a Personal Directive. A brief description of the five documents is found below, but please go to www.honoringchoicesmass.com, or talk to your doctor to learn more.

Health Care Proxy

A Health Care Proxy is a document in which you appoint a trusted person to be your Health Care Agent. An Agent is your advocate with the power to make health care decisions on your behalf if you are unable to make decisions yourself. Your Agent has legal authority to speak to your doctors about your condition and treatment options, look at your medical records, and make health care decisions to get you the best possible care that aligns with your goals, values, and choices. In Massachusetts, a spouse, family, or friend does not automatically have the legal authority to make health decisions on your behalf unless appointed in a Health Care Proxy. You can complete your Health Care Proxy on your own, or with an attorney.

Personal Directive

A Personal Directive is a personal document, not legally binding in Massachusetts, in which you give your Health Care Agent ("Agent"), family, doctors and care providers information about what's important to you and instructions about the kind of care you want and do not want. Your Personal Directive acts as your voice when you are unable to communicate or make care decisions for yourself.

- If you have chosen an Agent in a Health Care Proxy, your Agent uses your Personal Directive as a basis to make health care decisions on your behalf, and to talk with others about your care.
- If you have not chosen an Agent yet, your Personal Directive gives important information to your family, doctors and care providers to help them match quality care to your values and choices.

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Durable Power of Attorney

A Durable Power of Attorney is a legal document in which you appoint a person you trust, called an “Attorney-in-fact” to manage your money, property, and financial matters if you become disabled or incapacitated and are unable to effectively manage your financial matters yourself. This legal document specifies the “powers” or authority you are giving to a trusted person to manage your financial matters. A Durable Power of Attorney is usually completed with the help of an attorney.

Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST)

MOLST is a medical order form (similar to a prescription) for frail adults and individuals with a serious advancing illness that relays instructions between health professionals about the person’s care. MOLST is based on an individual’s right to accept or refuse medical treatment, including treatments that might extend life. Patients with a serious advanced illness at any age may discuss filling out a MOLST form with their clinician. MOLST is different from a Health Care Proxy form. Anyone with a MOLST form is also recommended to fill out a Health Care Proxy form. For more information, visit www.molst-ma.org.

Comfort Care/Do Not Resuscitate form (CC/DNR)

A Comfort Care/Do Not Resuscitate form is a medical document that verifies you have a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) medical order in effect. The medical order states you do not want any medical personnel to restart your heart beat and breathing if your heart beat and breathing stop, but to be given comfort care measures to allow for a comfortable death. A CC/DNR medical order is completed by your doctor. A copy is placed in your medical record, and you keep a copy at home easily visible for Emergency Medical Services to read and follow.

Would you like to learn more? Visit the Honoring Choices MA website to use their “Getting Started Tool Kit.” The kit includes a free Health Care Proxy, Personal Directive, and discussion guides to talk with your doctor. The Tool Kit can be found at www.honoringchoicesmass.com/make-a-plan/whos-your-agent-program-tool-kits/getting-started-tool-kit

