

Advance Directive: It's Your Right to Decide

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In Missouri, an advance directive is a legal document that allows individuals to make their healthcare wishes known in advance, should they become unable to make decisions for themselves. It essentially outlines preferences for medical treatment and names a healthcare agent to make decisions on the individual's behalf when they are incapacitated.

Here's a more detailed explanation:

What is an Advance Directive?

An advance directive is a broad term that encompasses various legal documents that allow individuals to plan for future healthcare decisions. In Missouri, the most common types of advance directives are:

[Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care:](#)

This document appoints a trusted individual (an agent or "attorney-in-fact") to make healthcare decisions for you when you are unable to do so.

[Health Care Choices Directive](#) (similar to a living will):

This document allows you to specify your wishes regarding medical treatments, including life-sustaining treatments, and can cover a broader range of decisions than a traditional living will.

Key Aspects of Missouri's Advance Directive Law:

Incapacity:

The advance directive becomes effective when a physician determines that the individual is incapacitated and unable to make or communicate their own healthcare decisions.

Agent's Role:

The designated agent is legally authorized to make healthcare decisions based on the individual's wishes, as expressed in the advance directive.

Physician's Obligation:

Missouri healthcare providers are legally obligated to follow the instructions outlined in the advance directive.

Regular Review:

It's recommended to review and update your advance directive, especially after significant life events.

Notarization:

In Missouri, the durable power of attorney for health care decisions must be notarized, according to North Kansas City Hospital.

Why is an Advance Directive Important?

Ensures Wishes are Followed:

It allows individuals to control their healthcare even when they are unable to communicate their preferences.

Reduces Stress on Family:

It can relieve family members of the burden of making difficult healthcare decisions during a stressful time.

Provides Clarity:

It provides clear guidance to healthcare providers, ensuring they understand the patient's wishes.

Promotes Individual Autonomy:

It upholds the principle of patient autonomy, allowing individuals to make choices about their own healthcare.

How to Create an Advance Directive in Missouri:

Obtain the Forms:

Missouri Bar offers a free "Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care and Health Care Directive" form that can be downloaded and photocopied, [according to missourilawyershelp.org](http://missourilawyershelp.org).

Complete the Forms:

Carefully fill out the forms, following the instructions provided.

Sign and Witness:

Sign and date the document and ensure it is witnessed according to Missouri law. Notarization is required for the durable power of attorney.

Share with Family and Healthcare Providers:

Discuss your wishes with your family and healthcare providers and provide them with copies of your advance directive.

Keep it Accessible:

Carry a card in your wallet stating that you have an advance directive and where it can be found, says North Kansas City Hospital.

By completing an advance directive, Missourians can ensure their healthcare wishes are respected and their loved ones are not left with the sole responsibility of making difficult decisions during a challenging time.

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