What is an Advance Directive?

An advance directive is a set of written directions you give about the health care you want in the event you lose the ability to make decisions for yourself. This brochure will talk about two ways you can make an advance directive:

1. **Health Care Power of Attorney**

2. **Living Will**

What is a Health Care

Power of Attorney?

A health care power of attorney is a legal document in which you name another person, called a “health care agent,” to make health care decisions for you when you are not able to make those decisions for yourself.

Choosing a Health Care Agent

• Choose someone you trust.

• Discuss your wishes with this person before making them your health care agent.

• An agent can be anyone close to you. It does not have to be a relative.

What is a Living Will?

A living will lets you state your desire not to receive life-prolonging measures in any or all of the following situations:

• You have a condition that is incurable that will result in your death within a short period of time.

• You are unconscious, and your doctors are confident that you cannot regain consciousness.

• You have advanced dementia or other substantial and irreversible loss of mental function.

What are life-prolonging measures?

Life-prolonging measures are medical treatments that would only serve to postpone death, including breathing machines, kidney dialysis, antibiotics, tube feeding (artificial nutrition and hydration), and similar forms of treatment.

What happens if I change my mind?

If you are competent, you may revoke a health care power of attorney in any way that makes clear your desire to revoke it. For example, you may destroy the document, write “void” across the document, tell your doctor you are revoking the document, or complete a new health care power of attorney.

You may revoke a living will by clearly stating or writing in any clear manner that you wish to do so. For example, you may destroy the document, write “void” across the document, tell your doctor you are revoking the document, or complete a new living will.

Keep a list of everyone to whom you gave a copy of your documents so you can provide them with updated documents in the event you change your mind.

What if I don’t have an Advance Directive?

If you are unable to make your own decisions, North Carolina law requires health care providers to look to the following individuals, in the order listed:

• Your husband or wife (even if you have been separated for many years)

• A majority of your parents and adult children

• A majority of your brothers and sisters

• An individual who has an established relationship with you, who is acting in good faith and who can convey your wishes.

Will your loved ones know your wishes?

Will the person you want to make decisions for you be the one chosen under North Carolina law?

Begin the discussion today. Complete a health care power of attorney and/or living will for peace of mind tomorrow.