

Advance Care Planning – What Is An Agent’s Role?

It’s impossible to know which medical treatment choices you might face in the future. What if you aren’t able to make these decisions for yourself? A durable power of attorney for health care lets you name an agent to carry out your wishes. This happens only if you can’t express your wishes yourself.

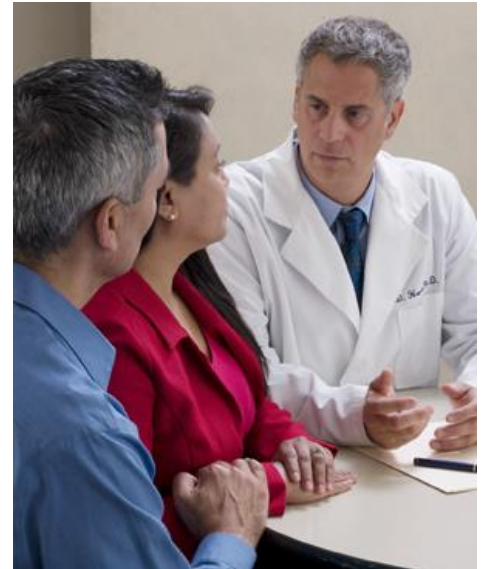
Before choosing an agent, think about these key questions

- Will he or she be willing to take on the responsibility?
- Does she or he know what your treatment wishes are?
- Will he or she listen to you talk about what your treatment wishes are?
- Can he or she make the decision you want even if he or she disagree with it?
- Can he or she make a medical decision in a stressful situation?

An agent’s duty

Your agent’s duty is to see that your wishes are followed.

- If your wishes aren’t known, your agent should try to decide what you want.
- Your agent’s choices come before anyone else’s wishes for you.
- A durable power of attorney for health care does not give your agent control over your money. Your agent also can’t be made to pay your bills.



It's a good idea to write down your wishes in an advance care plan and give a copy to your agent.

Find out what your agent can do

Restrictions on what an agent can and cannot do vary by state. Check your state laws. In most states your agent can:

- Choose or refuse life-sustaining and other medical treatment on your behalf.
- Consent to and then stop treatment if your condition doesn’t improve.
- Access and release your medical records.
- Request an autopsy and donate your organs, unless you’ve stated otherwise on your advance directive.