

Advance Directives

Advance Directives allow a person to decide, today, what medical care they will receive in case of a terminal illness or other life-threatening condition. The term “advance directive” refers to a variety of legal documents that are fact-specific and best prepared by an attorney. The group of directives includes the commonly used names of Durable Power of Attorney, Health Care Directive, Living Will, and a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Form. I’ve listed these directives here in declining order of allowable powers. For instance, a Durable Power of attorney may include the authorization to “deal” with property – buy, sell, manage – as well as the authority to give medical instructions to care providers. At the other end of the spectrum is the DNR which allows no latitude in carrying out the instructions. Washington law allows “self-determination” for our choices on terminal medical care – subject to only a few bans such as assisted suicide and self-destructive behavior.

It’s your life, your care and your property, so see to it that a competent attorney drafts what could be your final instructions. “Boilerplate” forms can leave huge and disappointing gaps with which your family will need to deal.