

Advance Care Planning (ACP)



A program of Community Hospice & Palliative Care
in collaboration with Northeast Florida hospitals

You have many rights when you receive health care. You have the right to be told about your medical condition, prognosis, treatment options and their benefits and risks. You also have the right to accept or refuse these options. Whatever you decide, it is important to discuss your wishes and decisions with your doctors and loved ones. You can also put your wishes, desires and plans for future medical care in writing, so they can be known should you become unable to speak for yourself.

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning (ACP) is a process of understanding, reflecting on, discussing and documenting future medical preferences in the event of a sudden illness or injury, or a chronic or life-limiting illness. ACP includes:

- Understanding your health care treatment options
- Clarifying your health care goals
- Weighing your options about what kind of care and treatment you would or would not want
- Making decisions about whether you want to appoint someone to speak on your behalf if you are unable to express your wishes
- Making a decision about whether you want to put your wishes in writing by completing an ACP document
- Communicating your wishes and sharing any documents with your family, friends, clergy, physicians and other health care providers

What is Honoring Choices Florida?

Honoring Choices Florida is a program with a mission to promote the benefits of Advance Care Planning (ACP), and provide adults with the opportunity to have an ACP conversation. The program provides individuals the opportunity to have a conversation with a trained facilitator, a person who can guide the decision-making process based on the individual's values, wishes, and goals. Community Hospice & Palliative Care oversees and coordinates the development and expansion of the program. The program is based on proven concepts, methodologies, training systems and materials.

What is an ACP Document and Why is it Important?

An ACP document, also known as an Advance Directive, is a form that identifies your health care surrogate, the person you have named to make decisions for you in the event you are unable to speak for yourself. It also records your wishes and preferences for care if two doctors confirm you have a terminal illness, an end-stage condition, or are in a persistent vegetative state. The document is used as a communication tool when you cannot speak for yourself. It helps guide your surrogate, loved ones and health care providers so your wishes can be honored.

Does an Advance Care Plan Expire?

While there is no expiration date, you can change or destroy an existing document at any time. We do suggest that you review your advance care plan whenever there is a change in decade, or when you experience the death of a loved one, a divorce, a new diagnosis or a decline in your health. We call these the "5 D's".

Advance Care Planning (ACP)



A program of Community Hospice & Palliative Care
in collaboration with Northeast Florida hospitals

Why do I have to talk about this?

Starting a conversation about end-of-life care can be difficult for all of us. It is, however, imperative that these conversations happen. It is impossible to put every single decision you or your loved ones might face in writing, therefore the conversation gives your family the opportunity to ask questions and clarify your goals. The tips below can help you start a conversation to increase the confidence and comfort of your loved ones should the need arise for them to make health care decisions for you.

How do I get started?

Some people wait until they are faced with a medical procedure or serious diagnosis to have a conversation with their loved ones or doctors. Although this is not necessarily a bad time, it is likely that you and your loved ones would already be stressed which can make the conversation more difficult. Regardless of when you start the conversation, consider these tips:

- Pick a time when you and your loved ones are comfortable and relaxed
- The more of your loved ones who are present, the more they all hear the same thing at the same time, helping to decrease the chance for future conflict
- Adopt an approach that signals this is something you are taking seriously without being grim or morbid

Some ice breakers could include:

- *"I've been thinking about the future and would like to talk with you about some things."*
- *"I need your help as I plan for the future..."*
- *"Everything is fine right now but I'd like for you to know how I feel about some things for the future."*
- *"While we're all together, I'd like to talk about the advance care plan I'm making."*

What should I discuss?

Think about any experiences you've had with family or friends who became seriously ill or injured. What did you learn from those experiences? How did those experiences shape your wishes/goals? Next, reflect on what gives your life meaning and what conditions you would consider worse than death. Finally, think about any personal, religious, or cultural beliefs that might influence the type of care you would want. Use those topics as an outline.

Here are some examples of how to start:

- *"I was thinking about what happened to _____ and it helped me to realize..."*
- *"After what happened with _____, I want you to know..."*
- *"What matters most to me is ..." (e.g. being comfortable, recognizing family, independence, being able to interact meaningfully, etc.)*
- *"I would or would not want to be on life support if..."*
- *"In thinking about the beliefs that are important to me, I realized that..."*
- *"What I believe about how end-of-life care should be is after..."*

No matter how you approach the conversation, your loved ones will look back on it as a gift they were given that helped make a difficult time easier.

Have the Conversation!

Can I get help with Advance Care Planning?

Yes! Honoring Choices Florida has certified Advance Care Planning facilitators available to meet with you at no cost. If you would like to schedule an appointment visit our website, HonoringChoicesFL.com or call **877.227.0050**