



Texas Talks - Advance Care Planning

Advance Directives

Advance directives are orders that a person creates to provide specific directions and wishes if they are unable to communicate those at some point in the future.

The following are types of advance directives:

- **Living will:** This instructs medical personnel about any treatment a person would like to receive. To learn more, [visit the Transitions and Decisions project website](#).
- **Durable power of attorney:** Your loved one names the person they want to act as their agent in a broad range of matters even if your loved one becomes mentally or physically disabled or incapacitated. To learn more, [visit the TexasLawHelp website](#).
- **Medical power of attorney:** This gives your loved one's named agent the authority to make all health care decisions for them in accordance with their wishes, including their religious and moral beliefs, when they are no longer capable of doing so. To learn more, [visit the Texas Health and Human Services website](#).
- **Do not resuscitate (DNR) order:** This allows your loved one to refuse resuscitation attempts and requires a signature from the person's physician.
 - *Out-of-hospital DNR order:* A specific legal document that would require your loved one's resuscitation wishes to be honored outside of the hospital. To learn more, [visit the HHS website](#).

Supported Decision-Making Agreements

Supported decision-making agreements (SDMAs) allow people who may struggle with managing their affairs to remain in control of their lives and make their own decisions with support. Through an SDMA, a person chooses someone they trust to serve as their supporter and help them with:

- Understanding options, responsibilities and the consequences of their decisions.
- Obtaining information relevant to their decisions.
- Communicating their decisions to the appropriate people.

An SDMA may be entered into by an adult with “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” The adult must voluntarily agree to the SDMA and oversee choosing their supporter, who can be any adult, is only allowed to assist the individual with specified activities and has no decision-making authority. To learn more, [visit the TexasLawHelp website](#).

Guardianship

Guardianship is a legal process for determining if, due to a physical or mental condition, a person is “incapacitated” and unable to manage their affairs. Under a guardianship, someone is appointed to make decisions on behalf of the person deemed incapacitated. Guardianship removes a person’s rights and should be the last option. In Texas, an individual may designate a guardian before the need arises. To learn more, [read the Texas Estates Code online](#) or [visit the HHS website](#).

Palliative Care

If your loved one contracts a serious illness, they may be interested in palliative care. [According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine](#), palliative care helps people who have a serious illness feel better and improve their quality of life. It is used to treat symptoms and side effects, both during curative treatment as well as at the end of life.

Hospice

[According to the National Institute on Aging](#), hospice is comprehensive care for a person with a terminal illness who is no longer receiving curative treatment. It can be provided in a home setting or in a facility, and the care team can include doctors, nurses, social workers and spiritual advisors. If a person receiving care under Medicare elects to receive hospice care, they will stop receiving curative treatment.

Planning ahead can be challenging, but it is important. To learn more about advance care planning, [visit the Transitions and Decisions project website](#).