

# Health Care Power of Attorney

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A health care agent also may be called a health care proxy or surrogate or an attorney-in-fact. Your health care agent is the person you choose in advance to make healthcare decisions for you in the event that you become unable to do so for yourself. Your health care agent will help make medical decisions on your behalf at the end of life or any other time you are not able to communicate, such as if you are severely injured in an accident.

State laws vary regarding the specific types of decisions health care agents can make. In general, a health care agent can agree to or refuse treatment and can withdraw treatment on your behalf. Your health care agent can use the information in your living will (also called a treatment directive), statements made by you in the past, and what he or she knows about you personally to make these decisions. For example, your agent can consent to surgery, refuse to have you placed on life-support, or request that you be taken off life support.

It is important that you choose someone you trust. Your agent needs to be willing and able to make potentially difficult decisions about medical treatment for you. Discuss your desires, values, fears, and preferences about medical care in various situations. Consider including the details about your medical wishes can be included in your final letter of instruction. The more your agent knows about you and your values, the more likely he or she will be to make the kinds of decisions you would make if you were able.