



Answers: Myths and Truths Advance Care Planning

Q. At what age should someone complete their advance directives?

- At the first Medicare wellness check
- Anyone over 50
- Anyone 18 years or older

Anyone 18 years and older. Regardless of your current health or age you should have a conversation with your loved ones about your healthcare wishes and complete advance directives. As we have been reminded with COVID-19, one's health can change quickly.

Q. Which Living Will forms are recognized in Arizona?

- Five Wishes Form
- Attorney generated form
- AZ Attorney General form
- All the above

All the above. The most important legal issue is to have the documents signed by the principal, dated, and be witnessed or notarized according to Arizona law.

Q. Advance directive documents only instruct the doctor to not treat or to withhold certain medical treatments?

- True
- False

False. Advance directives document your wishes around your healthcare. These are documents of choice NOT limitation. You can choose the type of care and the way this is provided as long as it is legal and ethical in the state of AZ. No matter what choices you have documented, even when you no longer want curative treatment attempts, you will always be given comfort care to address your medical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

Q. Who can assist you in completing your advance directives? (check all that apply)?

- Attorney
- Social Worker
- Family or close friend
- Healthcare providers
- Emergency personnel (Paramedics)

Attorneys, social workers, family, close friends, and healthcare providers are all good choices to assist you in completing your advance directives. Emergency personnel (EMS) do not have the time to discuss advance care planning as they are trying to provide immediate response.

Q. Which of the following is not an advance directive?

- Prehospital medical care directive
- Will or Living Trust
- Health Care Power of Attorney
- Mental Health Care Power of Attorney
- Living Will

A Will or Living Trust are not advance directives. These are estate planning documents that direct financial and real estate after your death. Attorneys will often include advance directives for their clients as part of an estate planning package.

Q. You should not have a Mental Health Care Power of Attorney (MHCPOA) unless you are diagnosed with a serious mental illness (SMI)?

- True
- False

False. While it is important that people with an SMI diagnosis complete a mental health care power of attorney document as part of their advance directives, a MHCPOA is also important to allow your agent to make decisions when you need behavioral treatment or inpatient behavioral placement that could be due to a diagnosis of dementia, Alzheimer's or even delirium due to a medication interaction.

Q. What is the USA average percent of people who have completed an advance directive?

- 20%
- 90%
- 30%
- 70%

30%. Overall, about a quarter (27 percent) of U.S. adults say they have their end-of-life wishes for medical treatment in a written document, ranging from just 8 percent of those under age 30 to about half (51 percent) of those ages 65 and over. Among the 72 percent who do not have their wishes written down, the most common reason is simply not having gotten around to it (49 percent), followed by never having considered it (27 percent). Kaiser Family Foundation 2016

Q. The following people should be informed about your completed advance directives? (choose all that apply)

- Your appointed health care agent
- Family members or loved one
- Esthetician
- Health care providers

All but your esthetician. While your health care agent or surrogate is the most important person you should discuss your advance directives with, it is also important to share your wishes with family/loved ones and your health care providers. While you may share your wishes with anyone else you choose, this would be a personal choice and not key to having your wishes honored.

Q. Advance directives are not followed for certain illnesses such as Covid-19?

- True
- False

False. Advance directives that meet the AZ law can direct care regardless of the diagnosis (there are some limitations regarding behavioral treatments if not directly documented). Covid-19 has shown us how quickly one's health status can change and that you often do not have time to communicate your wishes directly or complete an advance directive before your ability to do so is limited.

Q. How many people should you name as your health care power of attorney?

- As many as possible, the more the merrier
- Two, so they can discuss the options and choose together
- One, with an alternate(s)

One with an alternate(s). While you can appoint more than one person to be your health care agent it is recommended to choose one person and an additional alternate(s) (if the original person cannot serve as your agent at the time). During times of crisis, or when emotions are running high, having more than one agent can be problematic as differing opinions and values can cause conflict between the agents and slow down important decision making.

Q. Can advance directives be changed once they have been completed, signed and witnessed/notarized?

- Yes, they may be changed or updated once a year.
- Yes, they may be changed or updated at any time
- No, the decisions are final and cannot be adjusted

Yes, they may be changed or updated at any time up until you no longer have the capability to make decisions. Advance care planning should never be considered “a one and done” process. You should continue to review your wishes throughout your lifetime. You can use the Five Ds to guide this. Review and update (1) after receiving any new medical **Diagnosis**, (2) you experience a **Decline** in your health status due to age or illness, (3) after the **Death** of a close friend or loved one - especially if they had been named as an agent in your document, (4) during a **Divorce** or change in your relationship status, (5) every **Decade**.

Q. Everyone should complete a prehospital medical care directive document as part of their advance directives?

- True
- False

False. A Prehospital medical care directive/Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) are generally used by people who have an advanced or terminal illness or other physical or medical complications that would limit success of any DNR attempt and could create additional difficulties. This document is signed by you and your licensed healthcare provider (witnessed or notarized)

that informs emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or hospital emergency personnel not to resuscitate you. If you have a DNR (needs to be on orange paper), emergency personnel will not use equipment, drugs, or devices to restart your heart or breathing, but they will never withhold other medical interventions that are necessary to provide comfort care or to alleviate pain.

Q. If I name a health care agent, I am going to hurt the feelings of those loved ones who were not chosen?

True

False

False. This is a common misconception. This is a responsibility that does not fit for everyone. Some may not be accessible to a health care team or may feel that they would be too emotional to be able to communicate your decisions or make decisions on your behalf. Having open and direct conversations with your loved ones will help to minimize your concerns.

Q. If I name a health care agent, I am giving up the right to make my own decisions?

True

False

False. A health care power of attorney document does not go into effect until your physician determines you are incapable of making your own health care decisions. There are guidelines as to how this is determined in Arizona. Up to that point, you will continue to be in control of all your health care decision making and can make any changes to documents that you wish.