

WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

An **Advance Directive** is a document that you create which declares **your desires for how you would want your medical care to be handled** in cases where you **have become unable to communicate your wishes**, such as **sudden illness or accident**.

It provides a **common reference to your loved ones and physicians** about your decisions for your medical care in light of **your personal values and beliefs**, and even allows you to designate an **agent** to make decisions for you when you cannot.

Selecting an **agent** can be particularly important in Vermont, as **there is no Vermont law that states your spouse or next-of-kin can automatically make medical decisions for you** in events where you are unable to do so. You can select anyone to be your **agent** except your doctor or health care provider.

You may change any and all of the information in your advance directive at any time to ensure it reflects your current wishes.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

Everyone over the age of 18. Advance directives aren't just for people nearing the end of their lives – they are a **valuable tool for all adults**, as they can help **guide your care in unexpected situations when you are unable to speak for yourself**, such as a car accident or unexpected, incapacitating illness.

WHAT INFORMATION DO I PUT IN AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

- Select a **health care agent to make decisions when you cannot**, as well as indicate others who you do or do not want to have input about your medical care.
- Clarify your **general health care goals and wishes**.
- Identify any **limitations of treatment (or express desire for no limitations)**, such as whether you would want to undergo **CPR** if your heart stops, or how long you would want to be on a **breathing machine** if unable to breath on your own.
- Give **burial instructions**, and indicate any **interest in organ donation**.

HOW DO I WRITE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

You may write your own document, or use one of the several templates available through the **Vermont Department of Health** at:

www.healthvermont.gov/vadr/register.aspx

It is recommended that you file your advance directive with the **Vermont Advance Directive Registry**, (information also found at the above VDH website), as it provides:

- 24-hour access to your document to you, your agent, and your health care providers.
- A wallet card with an ID number indicating that you have filed an advance directive.
- Instructions about accessing or making changes to your advance directive.
- Yearly contact by the VADR to confirm whether the information in your document is still current.

We can provide templates for you to fill out if you are unable to print them yourself, and we can fax them to the registry if you don't have access to a method to send them in.

