

# UVM ScholarWorks

## Advance Directive Initiative- St. Johnsbury, VT

Item Type	Presentation;Presentation
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Download date	2026-06-05 23:17:15
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Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14849/2013">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14849/2013</a>



**St Johnsbury Community Health Center  
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## **Advanced Directive FAQs**

### **What is an Advance Directive?**

An advance directive is a legal document that lets you give detailed instructions for a broad range of health care decisions or appoint another (Health Care Agent) to make those decisions in the event that you are unable to due to serious injury or illness. It will allow health care professionals to best honor a your personal preferences and continue to give you the ability to make your own decisions.

### **Who should use it?**

If you are 18 years or older, regardless of your current health status, you should complete an advance directive. At any time, you could have an unexpected accident or illness, making you unable to navigate important health care decisions.

### **What do I do with it after filling it out?**

You should give copies to your doctor, your health care agent, and anyone else who you would like to keep informed (such as family or friends). In Vermont, you can register your Advance directive online or by mail with the Vermont Advance Directive Registry. This registry is a confidential, secure computer record that lets any health care provider have access to your Advance Directive when it is necessary.

### **Can I ever change it?**

Yes, if you fill out a new form, it automatically cancels the older form. You can also tear up the document, inform others that it no longer applies, and remove it from the registry at any time. Ideally, you should update your Advance Directive annually or at least after significant changes in your life (marriage, divorce, children, diagnosis of a medical condition, death of a family member or loved one)

### **Does it only refuse care?**

No, the Advance Directive gives you the ability to pick exactly what kind of treatment you would want along with what you do not.



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## **Types of Forms**

### **Appointment of a Health Care Agent**

This is the first and most important step in advance care planning. In Vermont, it is not automatically your spouse or relative that makes your decisions in the event that you are unable to make your own. An agent will have all the rights that you have to access your medical information and should be someone you trust to make decisions on your behalf. They should be someone who understands your goals, wishes, and values.

### **Advance Directive Short Form**

This form allows you to appoint an agent and make general statements about treatment goals to communicate basic preferences.

### **Advance Directive Long Form**

This form is much more specific, allowing you to provide more detailed instructions in a larger number of situations and consider all the options made available.

### **DNR/COLST (Do Not Resuscitate/Clinician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment)**

This form is not intended for everyone. If you are nearing the later stages of life or have a terminal illness, it allows you to limit some/all life-sustaining treatments as per your preference. This is a medical order and must therefore be completed by an MD, DO, PA, or NP to be valid. It should be kept in an openly visible place in your home and or on your person to communicate your wishes during an emergency response situation.

Please visit <http://vtethicsnetwork.org/decisions.html> for more information and online versions of all the forms mentioned above.