

# WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

## TRANSCRIPT

Today, many people of all ages are taking control of their futures by making sure their end-of-life healthcare wishes will be carried out.

An advance directive is a legal document that clearly states, in writing, how you want to be medically cared for if you can no longer speak or act for yourself because of accident or illness.

*"You never know when something is going to happen to you. So I think we need to put in order all our decisions about what to do with our body..."*

*"As a husband and father, choosing to do this ahead of time to let them know that it's okay to think about these things ... Nobody wants to think about death or leaving, but this is something that needs to be done. And having it on paper, a legal document, will help them make decisions later."*

Two documents make up an advance directive: a living will and a healthcare power of attorney. The living will details what kinds of end-of-life medical treatments you want if you cannot speak or act on your own. The healthcare power of attorney document allows you to assign a trusted friend or family member to make medical decisions for you when you cannot. Make sure to fill out both forms to have a complete advance directive.

*"Good morning. I have an appointment with Mr. Sanborn."*

You don't have to have a lawyer to write your own advance directive. But, because advance directive laws are different in every state, you may find one helpful. Your healthcare provider will also know about the specific steps you need to take in your state to complete an advance directive, and can help you.

There are forms available for free on the Internet. Just make sure you fill out forms for your state. Forms are also available at your doctor's office, local hospital, state's attorney's office, nursing homes and even some pharmacies. The next time you have a doctor's appointment, ask about getting the advance directive forms you need. If you are in the hospital and are interested in making an advance directive, talk to the hospital staff about getting more information and about the forms you need to fill out.

By putting your wishes in writing, you are taking steps to make sure you remain in control of your future – no matter what the future holds. It's never too early to take control. Do it now, well in advance of any life-threatening event or illness.