



# Honoring Choices®

## IDAHO

Partnering to Promote Advance Care Planning  
by Jannus

## Advance Care Planning Information Being a Health Care Agent for a Person Living With Dementia

### Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning is the process of thinking and talking about future medical decisions if you had a sudden event, like a car accident or illness, and could not make your own decisions. The best time to make these decisions is when you can choose for yourself.

### Health Care Agent

A Health Care Agent is the person you choose to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to make your own decisions. Discussing and sharing your wishes with your Health Care Agent is important.

### Advance Directive for Health Care

An Advance Directive is a written plan that names your Health Care Agent and allows you to provide instructions for health care treatments based upon your values and what is important to you.

*For more information about Advance Care Planning or for help creating an Advance Directive for Health Care, contact your health care team or Honoring Choices® Idaho.*

**HonoringChoicesIdaho.org**

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Dementia is a terminal illness, which means there is no cure. Dementia will affect a person's ability to think, express thoughts, and make decisions.

Given all that is known about dementia, the person will also experience physical changes that will make it hard or impossible to take care of themselves. If you have been chosen as a person's Health Care Agent, you may be called on by their health care team to make medical decisions when the person is unable to do so.

You may have questions and uncertainty about how much and how quickly the illness will affect a person. You can find reliable and respected information about what to expect from:

- Alzheimer's Association ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) / 1-800-272-3900)
- The person's doctor and other members of their health care team

Participating in advance care planning early with the person is important. It will help you be prepared for your role. Discussing the person's goals and values and preferences for future care will help you make decisions that honors and supports the person's wishes when dementia leaves them unable to express them.

### How do I start?

Take this one step at a time. You don't have to do this all at once!

- Talk with the person about what is important to them. (*See more information on the other side*).

You can find help on how to start the conversation at:

- [Honoring Choices® Idaho](http://www.honoringchoicesidaho.org) ([www.honoringchoicesidaho.org](http://www.honoringchoicesidaho.org))
- [The Conversation Project Conversation Starter Kit for Families and Loved Ones of People with Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia](http://www.theconversationproject.org) (Ask your health care team for a copy, download a copy at [www.theconversationproject.org](http://www.theconversationproject.org), or contact Honoring Choices® Idaho.)

- Discuss the person's goals and values and preferences for medical care. Ask the person to share this information with their health care team, and ask if there are other people that should know.
- Ask the person to write down his or her preferences in an Advance Directive for Health Care. Ask the person's health care team to document these same preferences in the person's medical record.
- Taking these steps early prepares you to continue involving the person in discussions about their goals and preferences as the illness evolves.

**See other side for additional information.**

**Knowing the person's wishes will help guide you through many decisions to come.**

**Talk with the person about what matters at different stages of the illness.**

The Conversation Project has a free 'Starter Kit' that can be useful throughout a person's dementia illness. You'll find information on talking with the person at different stages, and how to include family members in these important conversations.

[www.theconversationproject.org](http://www.theconversationproject.org).

**Talk with the person's health care provider.**

The person's doctor and health care team can help answer questions you may have about dementia.

**What if I am not able to talk with the person about their wishes?**

Gather as much information from the person's family and friends about what matters to the person. Ask yourself how the person would answer the questions suggested to the right.

**Should the person complete an Advance Directive document?**

If possible, yes. The section that names the Health Care Agent (Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care) is the most important. If the person can also complete the Living Will section, their goals and values for future medical care will also be documented.

**Where can I find the Honoring Choices® Idaho Advance Directive?**

Visit the Honoring Choices® Idaho website ([www.honoringchoicesidaho.org](http://www.honoringchoicesidaho.org)) to download a copy or to request a copy be mailed to you contact Honoring Choices® Idaho at (208) 947-4285 or [info@honoringchoicesidaho.org](mailto:info@honoringchoicesidaho.org)

## COMMON QUESTIONS:

### What is my role as a Health Care Agent?

You have been chosen and authorized to make health care decisions on the person's behalf if that person cannot communicate or make decisions.

Decisions you may be asked to make include:

- Starting, continuing, or stopping medical care or services, such as tests, medications, treatments, and surgery
- Life-prolonging treatments, like decisions about hydration and nutrition, help with breathing, and CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation)
- Releasing medical records
- Choosing where and how the person receives care
- Assisting with funeral arrangements

The best way to prepare for these important decisions is to talk with the person to understand their wishes for future health care. Talking with the person early in a dementia illness is important because the person will become less able to discuss their wishes as the illness progresses. But even as the illness progresses, it's important to include the person in decisions about their medical care whenever possible.

### What should I talk about with the person?

**Their values:**

- What is most important to them as they think about how they want to live?
- What matters to them at the end-of-life? What brings them comfort?
- How much do they want to know about their illness?
- What cultural, religious, or spiritual beliefs, if any, might help them choose the care they want or don't want?
- What fears or concerns do they have related to their illness?
- What abilities are so important to them that they can't imagine living without them?

**Their treatment goals:**

- How involved do they want me to be in their health care decisions? Do they want me to do exactly as they have said in conversations or written in an advance directive *or* do they want me to have some flexibility in future care decisions?
- Is it more important to live as long as possible *or* is quality of life more important than quantity? What treatments will support their goals?
- Do they want everything possible done to be kept alive and for how long? For instance, if they can no longer feed themselves, do they want nutrition and/or hydration given artificially or offered by hand? If they have trouble breathing on their own, do they want a machine or medication to help them breathe?
- Where do they prefer to spend their last days?

### Tough Times — Ask for Support

There may be tough times and decisions ahead. Thinking about the person's goals and values — what is important to them — will help guide decisions you may need to make. It is also important for you to ask for support from the person's health care team. The health care team can provide you with information and facts about the benefits and burdens of treatment options to help you make decisions that support the person's goals and values.