

## Advance Directive: Should I Have One?

**Your Life, Your Terms. Get the facts.**

### What is an Advance Directive?

Under Maine law, the term “advance directive” means any spoken or written instructions you give about the healthcare you want if a time comes when you are too ill to decide. Should you become too ill to make choices about your care, an advance directive will let others know which treatments/interventions you want and which you do not.

- A healthcare Advance Directive can give you and your family peace of mind. Documenting your healthcare wishes spares loved ones the burden of making tough end of life decisions.
- Advance directives allow for many choices. By completing an advance directive, you can identify treatments you want/don't want, state your wishes about donating your body, organs and/or tissues at death, outline your wishes about burial and funeral arrangements, and even state your wishes about resuscitation.

### Why do I need an Advance Directive?

Even if you're in good health, it's still important to make sure your healthcare team knows your wishes, since anyone's health status can change suddenly. Don't wait until there's a crisis. And don't wait for your doctor to bring it up. It always seems too early... until it's too late.

### Key Points to Remember:

- Advance directive laws vary from state to state.
- In Maine, anyone 18 years of age or older may use the Maine Health Care Advance Directive form (if you are younger than 18, you may also be able to use an advance directive under certain limited conditions).
- You can get help filling out an advance directive...at no cost to you.
- You have the right to change or cancel a healthcare advance directive *at any time*.
- Your physician generally must follow the choices in your advance directive.
- You can choose the time when your healthcare advance directive takes effect (this can either be right away, or you may choose to have it only take effect when you become too sick to make decisions for yourself).
- A healthcare advance directive does not take away your rights as a patient.
- A healthcare advance directive does not apply to your money or property.

**For more information or to complete a healthcare advance directive form, please talk to your healthcare provider.**