

These are important decisions for you to consider NOW. You should decide who you want to make decisions for you if you become incapable in the future.

Talk to the people you trust – your family, friends and health care providers. Talking about these issues may not be easy. Many people are uncomfortable talking about death and dying, especially in some cultures.

Yet, putting loved ones in the position of having to make decisions for you can be difficult. Discussing your choices now can help.

Talk about what is important to you and who you want to make decisions for you. Then put it in writing.

## *Planning for Your Future Healthcare Choices*

### Advance Directives in the Yukon

We all make decisions on a daily basis - about our family, our work and our personal life. We take the ability to make our own choices for granted.

But what if you were in a car accident, suffered a brain injury and were not able to make your own decisions? What if you were in a coma and not expected to regain consciousness? What if you lost your capability to make decisions slowly because of Alzheimer's Disease?

What would your wishes be for medical treatment and care? Who would you want to make decisions for you?



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

In the Yukon, you can appoint someone you trust to make health care and personal care decisions for you through an Advance Directive. In other places, these are sometimes called “living wills”. The person you appoint to make decisions for you when you become incapable of making your own decisions is called a **proxy**. You can also write down your wishes for future health care and personal care in a Directive.

## **Who can be my proxy?**

Your proxy should be someone you trust to carry out your wishes if you are not able to express them yourself. A proxy can make health care decisions and personal care decisions. A proxy cannot make financial decisions for you. To appoint someone to make financial decisions you must visit a lawyer to prepare an Enduring Power of Attorney.

## **Who can make a Directive?**

You must be at least 16 years of age and capable of understanding the nature and effect of your Directive when you sign it. That means that you understand what you have written and the consequences of your choices.

## **How do I make my Directive?**

The Yukon government has developed a sample form for you to use. This form, plus other information on Advance Directives can be found at [www.hss.gov.yk.ca](http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca)

Generally speaking, you do not need a lawyer to fill out an Advance Directive unless you want to give your proxy special authority.

## **What if I don't have a Directive?**

If you become incapable of making a health care decision and you don't have a Directive, your next of kin will be asked to make that decision for you. This may not be the person that you would have chosen to be your proxy.

## **Does my proxy have to follow my wishes?**

Your proxy must follow your wishes unless they are impossible to carry out or your proxy believes that because of changes in knowledge, technology or practice, you would no longer act on the wish. The most current wishes you made (verbal or written) while you were still capable must be followed.

If your proxy does not know your wishes, they must make a decision based on your values and beliefs. If they do not know your values and beliefs, they must make a decision based on what is in your best interests.

Health care providers must also follow any wishes you make to refuse treatment. For example, if you tell your health care provider that you do not want life support, they must follow your wish.

## **Who do I talk to?**

Discussing your values and beliefs about life and death can be very difficult. Talk to people who are closest to you. Talk to your physician to get more information about your health conditions. You may find that talking to your spiritual advisor is a helpful way to sort out your fears, concerns and values.

## **What do I do once I complete my Directive?**

Once you have signed a Directive in the presence of two witnesses, your proxy must also sign it. Once it is complete, it is your responsibility to make sure that the people who need to know about your wishes get a copy of your Directive.

## **Take the first step**

Reading this pamphlet is the first step in planning for your future health care choices. Planning ahead is important so that loved ones and health care providers can respect your wishes. The process of sorting out your values and wishes can be difficult but rewarding.

