



## **Inyo County Behavioral Health**

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(760) 873-6533

10/15/2014

Inyo County  
Behavioral Health

# **Advance Health Care Directives**



Information for  
Consumers

## What is an Advance Health Care Directive?

- An Advance Health Care Directive (Advance Directive) is a written document that describes your directions and preferences for treatment and care during times when you are having trouble communicating or making decisions.
- It can inform other people, like your provider, about what treatment or type of care you want or do not want.
- It can also identify a person called an ‘agent’ who you trust to make decisions for you when you are not able to communicate or make decisions for yourself.
- Advance Directives are regulated by state and federal laws.

## Should I have an Advance Directive?

There are benefits to having an Advance Directive:

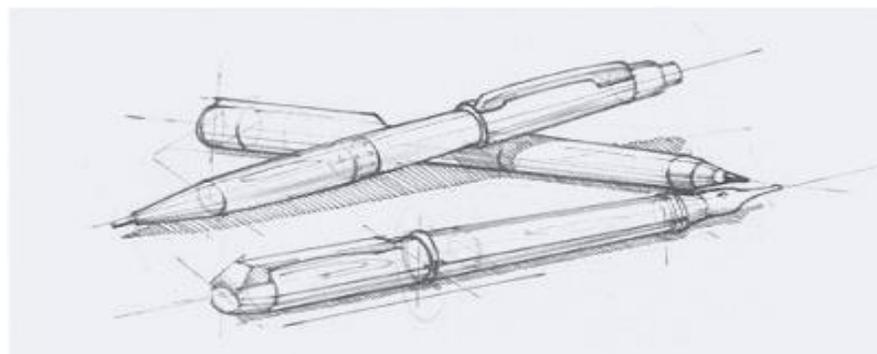
- You have more control over what happens to you during times of crisis.
- Providers and other people will know what you want even if you cannot communicate.
- Your Advance Directive can help your case manager and other people who are involved in your treatment and care.

## How do I make an Advance Directive?

You can get an Advance Directive form from legal or medical associations, as well as through most hospitals, doctors, and lawyers. Be sure that you understand the form and that you follow the directions.

## Where can I go for more information about Advance Directives?

If you have any questions about completing an Advance Directive, please contact an attorney or health care provider or representative.



As long as you are able to do so, you can change or cancel your Advance Directive at any time. If you change your agent, you need to make the change in writing. All other changes can be made verbally to your provider.

Be sure to let everyone who has a copy of your Advance Directive know that you made changes or cancelled your advance directive.

### **What if I already have a living will or durable power of attorney?**

Where there is a conflict between an Advance Directive and any previous directive (such as a living will), the newer document will have legal priority. To reduce confusion, it is probably best to have the same person act both as your Advance Directive agent and your power of attorney.

### **How can I make a complaint?**

If you have a complaint about a provider not following your Advance Directive, you can contact the California Department of Health Services, Licensing and Certification Division, at 1-800-236-9747, or by mail at P.O. Box 997413, Sacramento, CA, 95899-1413.

- The law requires that providers respect and follow what you write in your Advance Directive as closely as possible.

You are not required to have an Advance Directive to get treatment or services. You will not be refused treatment or services if you decide to have an Advance Directive.

### **What's included in an Advance Directive?**

Any information that might be important to your treatment can be a part of your Advance Directive. For example:

- You can agree or refuse to be given specific medications or to be admitted to the hospital;
- You can decide who can visit you if you are in the hospital;
- You can decide who you want to make decisions for you (your agent);
- You can include anything else you want or do not want to happen in your future care.

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## Should I have an agent?

You have the right to name an agent in your Advance Directive. Your agent needs to be:

- At least 18 years old
- Someone who you trust and can talk to about the care you want
- Someone who knows you well enough to know what is important to you
- Someone who supports your treatment choices
- Someone who can tell providers what you want and can make decisions for you when a decision is needed.

By law, your agent cannot be your doctor, your case manager, or your residential provider, unless that person is also your spouse, adult child, or sibling. *Note: You may not choose an Inyo County Behavioral Health staff person as your agent.*

## Who should get a copy of my Advance Directive?

If you have an agent, that person must be given a copy of your Advance Directive. It is a good idea to give a copy to your current

mental health provider, your medical provider, your lawyer (if you have one), and family members who you trust.

Bring a copy of your Advance Directive if you are being admitted to a mental health or health facility. All treatment providers who get a copy are required to make it a part of your chart.

## Will everything in my Advance Directive be followed?

Your Advance Directive will be followed whenever possible. However, sometimes your Advance Directive may not be followed because:

- Your provider cannot follow your Advance Directive as a matter of conscience; or
- Your treatment choices are not available; or
- Following your Advance Directive would violate state or federal law; or
- Your instructions would put you or other people in danger.

## Can I change or cancel my Advance Directive?