

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES FOR HEALTH CARE: A Catholic Perspective Explanation

The Catholic Bishops of New Jersey have prepared the following Advance Directives for Health Care. The naming of a health care representative (proxy) and instruction directive are combined into one form. The New Jersey Advance Directives for Health Care Act went into effect on January 7, 1992. This act allows adults to complete an advance directive. You can choose either a health care representative (proxy) or give directions about your health choices and wishes, or both. It is not a law that you must have an advance directive. You cannot be refused admission to a health care facility because you do not have an advance directive.

Before completing an advance directive, it is important to think about the following:

- You should talk about your choices with your entire family. Your family may include your spouse, adult children, parents, brothers, and sisters.
- You should talk to your doctor about your health care choices.
- Your health care representative (proxy) should know you and your wishes about medical treatment. Your health care representative has the legal right to make health care decisions based on your advance directive when you cannot make decisions.
- You do not need a lawyer to complete an advance directive. You may talk to one if you wish.
- You need to review your advance directive from time to time to make sure that your wishes are still the same.
- You can decide to change your advance directive at any time.
- If you want to cancel your advance directive, put it in writing or talk to your health care representative, doctor or family.
- You have a right to make decisions about your medical treatment.
- Medical care will not be withheld just because you become unable to make your own treatment decisions.

This document is approved by the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey.

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