



Make Your Advance Healthcare Directive

Protect your choices and wishes



Learn about making one at:

safeguardingireland.org





SUMMARY

2

An **Advance Healthcare Directive** records your future healthcare decisions including refusals and consents on treatment, surgery, medicines and resuscitation.

Safeguarding Ireland recommends that all adults, and particularly those using healthcare services, make an Advance Healthcare Directive and share a copy with important people.

Doing so protects your future healthcare decisions – and is better for families, doctors and nurses who need to know your wishes.

To make one go to and complete one of the two available templates which are at:

- Decision Support Service – www.decisionsupportservice.ie
- Think Ahead website – www.thinkahead.ie

Making an Advance Healthcare Directive is free of charge and not difficult to do. More details follow in this booklet.

What is an Advance Healthcare Directive?

An Advance Healthcare Directive is a document in which you write down your decisions on healthcare treatment, for if in the future you lacked capacity to make, or communicate, those decisions.

If you continue to have decision-making capacity then your Advance Healthcare Directive would not come into effect.

However, if in the future you didn't have decision-making capacity to make healthcare decisions, then your Advance Healthcare Directive would come into effect.

This could be due to the progression of age related frailty, dementia, a serious illness, a physical or intellectual disability, or a sudden accident.

Having an Advance Healthcare Directive would provide a guide for healthcare professionals so that your choices and wishes on healthcare are known and can be adhered to.

3

An Advance Healthcare Directive includes three key parts:

- Your refusals on life-sustaining treatments, artificial nutrition, surgery, medicines and resuscitation
- Your consents on medical and treatment options, including pain relief and where you would like to be treated
- Appointing someone you choose and trust, called a Designated Healthcare Representative, to ensure your Advance Healthcare Directive is followed.

Once made – healthcare professionals are bound to adhere to your refusals and to make every effort to provide the treatments you would like to receive. Also, there is clarity on who has authority to act on your behalf.

How to make an Advance Healthcare Directive

Safeguarding Ireland recommends using either one of two templates at:

- The Decision Support Service **decisionsupportservice.ie**, or call (01) 211 9750
- Think Ahead from the Irish Hospice Foundation **thinkahead.ie**, or call (01) 679 3188 (a hardcopy version can be posted for €5).

You can also choose to write out your treatment refusals and consents in your own document, but Safeguarding Ireland recommends using one of these two templates which will guide you.

Appointing a Designated Healthcare Representative

It is not required to appoint a Designated Healthcare Representative to make an Advance Healthcare Directive, however Safeguarding Ireland recommends doing so where possible.

That means appointing someone you choose and trust who would act on your behalf regarding decisions included in your Advance Healthcare Directive. You can also appoint a second person as your Alternate Healthcare Representative, in case your chosen person were unable to act.

What your Advance Healthcare Directive must contain

An Advance Healthcare Directive must include relevant personal and contact details and be signed by:

- Yourself
- Your Designated / Alternate Healthcare Representatives if appointed
- Two witnesses, with one witness a non-family member.

Who needs to know about your Advance Healthcare Directive

Once you have completed your Advance Healthcare Directive you should store it safely. It is also important that those who need to know about it do, and the following people should be given a copy:

- Your Designated / Alternative Healthcare Representatives
- Family Doctor (GP)
- Any relevant healthcare professionals you are dealing with
- The Emergency Department if admitted to hospital
- The person in charge if you live in a healthcare or residential facility.

Changing an Advance Healthcare Directive

You can change your Advance Healthcare Directive at any time while you have decision-making capacity. After changing it, you need to follow the same steps again to make it valid, including signatures and witnesses.

Confusion about 'Next of Kin'?

Sometimes people incorrectly think that an available family member, or 'next of kin', can step in and make healthcare decisions on another family member's behalf. This is not the case. A next of kin can be a contact point for healthcare professionals, but has no authority regarding another person's healthcare decisions unless appointed as their Designated Healthcare Representative.



Planning of Property, Finances and Personal Welfare – an Enduring Power of Attorney

A second important step to protect our choices and wishes is to make an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA).

An EPA is similar to appointing a Designated Healthcare Representative regarding healthcare treatments, but instead relates to decisions on property, financial affairs and personal welfare.

An EPA is a legal document in which you appoint a chosen person (or you can appoint more than one person) to act on your behalf for if in the future you no longer had capacity to make your own financial decisions.

Like an Advance Healthcare Directive it would only come into effect if you no longer had decision-making capacity.

Safeguarding Ireland recommends that all adults, and particularly those who may face future challenges with decision-making, also make an Enduring Power of Attorney.

6

To make one, talk with your Solicitor and they will guide you. An EPA needs to be registered with the Decision Support Service.

Setting up a Decision Support Service Account

To register an EPA you need a Decision Support Service Account and this can be set up at www.decisionsupportservice.ie.

[NOTE: If you have an existing MyGovID account you can import these details.]

There is currently no official ‘register’ system for Advance Healthcare Directives which is why sharing a copy with relevant healthcare professionals and representatives is important. However, this is expected to change in the future and may be a further use for a Decision Support Service Account.

Decision Support Arrangements

A person who needs support with decision-making can also appoint a Decision-Making Assistant or a Co-Decision-Maker to assist them.

If a person does not have an Advance Healthcare Directive or an Enduring Power of Attorney in place but decisions need to be made on their behalf, the Court can appoint a Decision-Making Representative.

These are formal and accountable arrangements and more information is at www.decisionsupportservice.ie

CONCLUSION – Make an Advance Healthcare Directive

The primary message of this booklet is to make an Advance Healthcare Directive, particularly if you may be accessing healthcare services more regularly in the future. The steps are to access one of the two available templates, make your Advance Healthcare Directive and be sure that those who need to know about it do. Protect your healthcare choices and wishes.

7



FIND OUT MORE

Advance Healthcare Directive template:

Decision Support Service decisionsupportservice.ie
or call 01 211 9750.

Think Ahead (hard or soft copy) thinkahead.ie
or call 01 679 3188. (An initiative of Irish Hospice Foundation.)

To set up a Decision Support Service Account see:

decisionsupportservice.ie / 01 211 9750

NOTE: The Decision Support Service website has a lot of useful information about Advance Healthcare Directives, EPAs and decision support arrangements.

Respond to and report Adult Abuse

- For an urgent and serious issue: contact the Gardai 999 / 112
- For an ongoing concern, contact the HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams: hse.ie/safeguarding



**Think Ahead Advance
Healthcare Directive**



**Advance Healthcare Directive
template on the Decision Support
Service website**

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