

How to Talk with Your Healthcare Providers

Talking with your doctor or healthcare providers about your end-of-life wishes is a discussion to have before a crisis occurs. Chances are that he or she is waiting for you to start the conversation.

When you discuss your concerns and choices:

- Ask your doctor to explain treatments and procedures that may seem confusing before you complete your directives.
- Talk about pain management options.
- Let your doctor know that you are completing your advance directives.
- Make sure your doctor is willing to follow your directives. The law does not force physicians to follow directives if they disagree with your wishes for moral or ethical reasons.
- Give your doctor a copy of your completed directives. Make sure your doctor knows the name and telephone number of your appointed healthcare agent.
- Assure your doctor that your family and your appointed healthcare agent know your wishes.

You may ask your doctor specifically:

- Will you talk openly and candidly with me and my family about my illness?
- What decisions will my family and I have to make, and what kinds of recommendations will you give to help us make these decisions?
- What will you do if I have a lot of pain or other uncomfortable symptoms?
- How will you help us find excellent professionals with special training when we need them (e.g., medical, surgical and palliative care specialists, faith leaders, social workers, etc.)?
- Will you let me know if treatment stops working so that my family and I can make appropriate decisions?
- Will you still be available to me even when I am close to the end of my life?