

FAQ: What is an Advance Medical Directive?

An important part of estate planning is ensuring that someone can manage your financial and health care matters in case of disability. Many states have different ways of allowing you to set forth your health care wishes. Some states (including Maryland) allow you to execute an **Advance Medical Directive**. Other states have similar documents, sometimes titled Health Care Proxy, Living Will, Health Care Power of Attorney (or some combination thereof). These documents in general allow you to:

- (i) designate someone (generally referred to as a health care agent) to make medical decisions for you if you cannot make these decisions yourself,
- (ii) outline your wishes for your health care agent to follow regarding which medical procedures you would like taken, withdrawn or withheld in extreme situations, and
- (iii) set forth your wishes for organ donation, burial and/or cremation.

Deciding who to name as your health care agent and which medical procedures you want taken or withheld in life or death situations are very difficult and important decisions and should be considered carefully. Signing an Advance Directive allows you to control your health care future, and thus try to avoid family disagreements and judicial involvement.