

End of Life Care Planning – Resources

While each of us would like to be as prepared as possible for end of life, it is easy to move this type of work down our ongoing and often growing list of priorities. Advanced planning may help to reduce or minimize stress by knowing that you have prepared for whatever the future holds for you. Our experience at Hospice of Southern Maine is that people who have visualized and prepared for their future can rest a bit easier when challenges arise since they have plans in place. It's never too early to plan, but it's often too late.

Medical Planning: End of life care planning should begin by filling out an **Advanced Directive Form** which will have your wishes be known to your medical providers, family, and caregivers. A living will is similar in that it communicates your wishes for what happens to your health care while you're still *alive and living* versus a last will which indicates what your wishes are once you are deceased for distribution of your belongings. Use the [Maine Health Care Advanced Directive Form](#) to communicate to your family and medical providers what medical care you wish to receive in case you are too sick to speak for yourself. The form allows you:

- to appoint a medical power of attorney who can make medical decisions for you if you are no longer able to communicate;
- to indicate what specific medical treatments you do or don't want;
- to communicate your organ, body and tissue donation wishes after your death;
- to indicate your preferred funeral and burial agreements (or who can make those decisions for you).

You'll need two witnesses to sign the form. This form doesn't need to be notarized. Give copies to your family, your health care providers, and your preferred hospital. You can also sign the Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Form included in the Advanced Directive if you don't want to be resuscitated by ambulance crews if summoned to help you. (If you are admitted to the hospital, the hospital will require a separate DNR to be signed).

Final Wishes: It's never too early to think about what your final wishes are so that you can rest easy. Everyone understands that a **Last Will and Testament** is important in order to distribute



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your estate and meaningful items to your loved ones. Your will should be notarized since this makes it official and will speed things up in probate without the court having to contact any witnesses who may have signed it.

Some people's final wishes are to mend fractured relationships. It's never too early to begin the process. It obviously can get the point where it is too late.

If you like to be very organized, refer to the Life File list from **Death with Dignity** for their ideas on how to be prepared. Compiling a list of your accounts, passwords, etc. will make it easier on your loved ones in the future. Visit: <https://deathwithdignity.org/resources/life-file/>

Other helpful information on hospice topics:

Hospice of Southern Maine's Ask the Experts series seeks to inform the community and answer questions about hospice care. Presentations are 30 minutes long and are recorded and made available in our library at www.askhospiceexperts.org. We invite you to ask us any hospice questions by emailing us at askhospiceexperts@hospiceofsouthernmaine.org.