

# Advance Care Planning

## Glossary

Words in this glossary are presented in the e-learning course, *Advance Care Planning: An Introduction for Public Health and Aging Services Professionals*, available on the Web at <http://www.cdc.gov/aging/advancecareplanning>.

**Advance directives:** a term that refers to a variety of documents through which an individual known as a **declarant**, expresses personal preferences regarding health care treatment, including end-of-life care, and/or names a **proxy** to act on his or her behalf in the event the declarant is without **decision making capacity**.

**Agent:** a designated person legally empowered to make decisions related to the health care of an individual known as a **declarant**, in the event that the individual is unable to do so; also known as a **proxy** or **surrogate**.

**Capacity/incapacity:** a clinical determination of a person's ability to make healthcare decisions on his or her own behalf. A determination of "capacity" is specific and particular; an individual may be able to make some decisions and not make others, or may have capacity at one time and not at another.

**Declarant:** the individual who is expressing his or her preferences regarding health care treatment, including end-of-life care.

**Durable power of attorney for health care:** a legal document that allows an individual to name a particular person—known as an **agent, surrogate** or **proxy**—to make health care decisions on his or her behalf if he or she is no longer be able to make such decisions; also known as **medical power of attorney**.

**Executor:** a legal term referring to a person named to carry out the directions of a last will and testament. In many cases, the executor and the health care proxy are different individuals.

**Legal guardian:** a person who has the legal authority and the corresponding duty to care for the personal and property interests of another person. In many cases, the legal guardian and the health-care proxy are different individuals.

**Health-care treatment directive:** a personal statement of an individual's preferences regarding health care treatment, including end-of-life care, that is consistent with the legal underpinnings of living will statutes, where they exist. However, health care treatment directives are broader in scope than living wills because they are not limited to terminal conditions; also known as **medical directive**.

**Hospice care:** a special model of care for patients who are in the last phases of an incurable illness and wish to receive end-of-life care at home or in a specialized care setting. A priority of hospice is to incorporate the principles of palliative care to minimize pain and discomfort in the face of an advanced or terminal condition.

**Living will:** a legal document that provides instruction about if or when life-support treatments should be withheld or withdrawn. Living wills are the earliest form of advance directives.

**Medical directive:** a personal statement of an individual's preferences regarding health care treatment, including end-of-life care, that is consistent with the legal underpinnings of living will statutes, where they exist. Medical directives are broader in scope than living wills because they are not limited to terminal conditions; also known as **health-care treatment directive**.

**Medical power of attorney:** a legal document allowing an individual to name a particular person—known as an **agent, surrogate** or **proxy**—to make health care decisions on his or her behalf when he or she cannot make such decisions.

**Palliative care:** a broad term for treatment delivery when there is no reasonable expectation for a cure. This recognized medical intervention focuses on pain management and symptom control.

**POLST:** an acronym that stands for Physicians Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment and refers to a state policy that helps translate advance directives into a set of medical orders to make sure that a person's preferences are honored no matter where they receive care.

**Proxy:** a designated individual legally empowered to make decisions related to the health care of an individual, or **declarant**, in the event that he or she is unable to do so; also known as **agent** and **surrogate**.

**Surrogate:** a designated individual, legally empowered to make decisions related to the health-care of an individual, or **declarant**, in the event that he or she is unable to do so; also known as agent and proxy.

