

## Why Complete and Discuss Advance Directives?

Simply *telling* family members what kinds of medical care you do or do not want if you are unable to speak for yourself does not ensure your wishes will be carried out. Completing advance directives ...

- Allows you to control your own health care when you cannot speak for yourself.
- Increases the chance you will get the care you want.
- Can help open the dialog with your health care providers about certain medical procedures, what they are, whether you want them or not, and under what circumstances you would choose them.
- Helps guide your physician on what medical treatments you do or do not want.
- Is a kind thing to do for your loved ones. They will know they are carrying out your wishes and will have a written tool to share with medical providers.
- Helps open the discussion with family members about your values and views on quality of life.
- Helps avoid conflict among family members about your wishes or, worse, possible court battles over maintaining or withdrawing life support.

The law guarantees your right to make decisions about your medical care, including withholding life support through artificial means.

## Why Talk about Medical Preferences in Advance?

Communication is the single most important step in health care planning. Talk about your wishes with the people who may be called upon to speak or decide for you. Why is this important?

- No matter what your advance directive says, others will not fully understand your wishes. The more thoroughly you communicate, the easier it will be for everyone to respect your wishes.
- It will help you think about what you want. Others will ask you questions or tell you things that will make you think about your wishes in another way.
- It will help your loved ones make difficult decisions with less pain, doubt, and anxiety.
- It may save money. Sometimes families continue medical treatments long past the point where they are helpful, simply because they are unsure what their loved one would have wanted. This is emotionally and financially costly ... and unnecessary.
- It may even bring your family closer together.

**Funeral Consumers Alliance of San Joaquin & the Mother Lode**

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