

Patient Advocate Guide

You have been chosen as the Patient Advocate for: _____

What is a Patient Advocate?

A Patient Advocate is someone who is chosen by a person to make medical treatment decisions for when that person can't think or speak for him or herself. This may happen if the person is very sick or is injured.

To accept the role of Patient Advocate, you must sign a Patient Advocate Acceptance form, usually included in an Advance Directive form.

What Does a Patient Advocate Do?

The Patient Advocate makes medical treatment decisions for a person, based on that person's wishes and preferences for care. A meaningful conversation between the person and the Patient Advocate will help the Patient Advocate know what to do in the event the person cannot speak for him or herself.

Being chosen as the Patient Advocate means the person has a lot of trust in you to act for him or her. Some important things to think about are:

- Am I willing to be the Patient Advocate?
- Do I know the medical choices the person would want?
- Can I make medical choices that the person would want even if I do not agree with them?
- Am I able to make these medical choices even if it is very hard to do?

Individuals may select a Primary Patient Advocate and a Secondary or Successor Patient Advocate. The Secondary Patient Advocate would act only if the Primary Patient Advocate was not available.

The Patient Advocate does not make financial decisions in this role.

When Do I Make Decisions for the Person?

Your patient advocate role will go into effect when two doctors, or a doctor and a psychologist, agree that the person cannot make his or her own medical treatment decisions.

You will be asked to continue to make medical decisions only as long as the person is unable to make decisions.

How Can I Prepare?

It is helpful to talk with the person who chose you, so that you can understand and make the medical choices that you know the person would want. You may ask the person questions like:

- What is important to you to live well?
- What does quality of life mean to you?
- What would make life not worth living?