End of Life Care – Making a Plan

Why is planning for your end of life care important?

- By **planning**, you make decisions that reflect your wishes for end of life care and create a guide for loved ones and health care professionals to follow.
- By **not** planning, you allow others to make decisions for you.
- By **planning**, you provide your loved ones with peace of mind because they will know what you want and will not be left guessing.

How do I make a plan?

- **Think** about what is important to you and what care you want at the end of your life. Professionals or family members can help you with this.
- **Document** your wishes by creating an advance directive.
- **Communicate** your wishes to family members, friends and health care professionals by sharing copies of your advance directives. **Note:** If life circumstances change, plans can be changed.

What is an advance directive?

- **Advance directive**: instructions about what kind of care you want and don’t want and who can speak for you if you are not able to express your wishes.
  - **Living will**: the kind of care you wish to receive
  - **Health care power of attorney and mental health care power of attorney**: who you designate to speak on your behalf if you are not able to speak for yourself

What forms do I need to fill out?

Each state has its own requirements for making end of life care wishes official. In Arizona, you can complete official forms or write out a personal statement of your own. In either case, your documents need to be properly signed and witnessed.

Where can I get forms or planning documents?

Official State of AZ forms are available from the AZ Attorney General’s website


Another commonly used form is Five Wishes, available from Aging with Dignity

**Five Wishes** [https://www.agingwithdignity.org/five-wishes.php](https://www.agingwithdignity.org/five-wishes.php)

**The Conversation Project: Your Conversation Starter Kit**

http://theconversationproject.org/starter-kit/intro/. A 4-step resource guide to planning and having a conversation about end of life care

**Let’s Talk: Starting the Conversation about Health, Legal, Financial, and End of Life Issues**


Why to plan for end of life and how to start; includes legal, financial and medical care planning from Eldercare Locator, Department of Health and Human Services

**Your Life Your Choices**


**Compassion and Choices Good-to-Go Toolkit**


A member of End of Life Care Coalition and the Elder Alliance

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[www.pcoa.org/resources/end-of-life-care-planning](http://www.pcoa.org/resources/end-of-life-care-planning)

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Once I make my choices, who can be my witness?
In Arizona, have one person at least 18 years old who does not provide your health care, is not related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption, is not your representative or a beneficiary in your will, witness that you have signed a living will or power of attorney document. This witness is a friend, neighbor, acquaintance or professional.

What if I am not able to sign my name?
Your witness can write a statement on the form saying that you have expressed your wishes and intend to adopt this advance directive.

What do I do with my forms once they are signed?
Give a copy to your power of attorney, one to your health care provider and if you wish, family members; keep one for yourself with other important documents. Your copy should be easy for others to find in case of an emergency. You can carry a wallet sized card indicating that you have a plan and where to find it and/or leave a similar card on your refrigerator or in another prominent place in your house. It is very important that you also talk about your wishes with your power of attorney, health care provider and family members so they clearly understand your desired end of life care.

What is the End of Life Care Coalition?
The End of Life Care Coalition is comprised of members that represent the diverse sectors in which end of life care planning occurs, including health care, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, senior and assisted living facilities, academic institutions, and businesses whose mission is to promote education and resources to prepare for the end of life.

Members of the End of Life Care Coalition
Casa de la Luz Foundation, Interfaith Community Services, AZ Center for Integrative Medicine, AZ Connected Care, AZ Hospital and Healthcare Association, Elder Circles, Jewish Family and Children’s Services of Southern Arizona, Life Work Transitions, Our Family Services, Paige Ahead: Healthcare Education & Consulting, Pathways Education and Consultation in the End of Life Care, Pima Council on Aging, Southwest Folklife Alliance, United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, University of Arizona Center on Aging

Where can I get more information about making plans or about the End of Life Care Coalition?
Call or send an email to Susan Kasle, MPH, Pima Council on Aging 520.546.2006, skasle@pcoa.org. Or visit www.pcoa.org/resources/end-of-life-care-planning, for more information and links to coalition members’ websites.