

# A Guide to Advanced Medical Directives

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Advanced Medical Directives help articulate healthcare preferences and designate trusted advocates to make crucial decisions on your behalf when you cannot do so. These documents are a vital component of any well-drafted estate plan. This article summarizes common directives and considerations for drafting and reviewing these instructions and appointments.

We recommend reviewing these documents every 3-5 years or if you experience significant life changes. Keep your loved ones up-to-date as these instructions are amended and share these documents in multiple formats so they are easily accessible in an emergency health event. If you have questions about establishing or reviewing your estate plan, please contact your wealth consultant or send an email [info@evergreengavekal.com](mailto:info@evergreengavekal.com).

## **Living Will**

A Living Will, also known as a Healthcare Directive, states what type of medical treatment you do and do not wish to have. It also dictates when treatment can take place. Common examples include life-sustaining treatments, artificial nutrition and hydration, and comfort care in case of terminal conditions and vegetative states. This document can also articulate Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) instructions in case of respiratory or cardiac arrest. You may also state post-mortem wishes, such as organ donation and autopsy requests.

This document acts as a guide for your healthcare agent, and being specific can help settle disputes between families or differences of opinion. Reviewing these wishes with your medical team, estate agents, and family members is important to ensure your instructions are carried out appropriately.

## **Healthcare Power of Attorney**

This document appoints an agent to act on your behalf to make medical decisions if you become incapacitated. You can give the agent as much or as little power as you wish. Your agent must be at least 18 years old and can be a family member, close friend, or other trusted person. Review your wishes with your agent and ensure they are comfortable acting in this capacity. This individual should work well with other agents of your estate and consider if they live close to you or near where you receive care. It is also recommended that you appoint successor agents in case the first in-line is unable to serve on your behalf.

## **HIPAA Authorization**

A valid HIPAA release allows agents of your estate to access your medical records, receive updates about your medical condition, and access bills associated with your healthcare. The release form should include specific information regarding who can access what information and when, for example, only providing information if you are incapacitated. Additionally, your doctor may give you a HIPAA release form for their specific office to provide information to certain individuals, such as your spouse. Review these documents to ensure your loved ones can access necessary information when they are needed.

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**Katie Vercio, CFP®**

Senior Financial Planner

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