End of Life Documents

**Advance Directive** An umbrella term for the overarching process and the stack of documents you can use to express what you would like doctors and other health-care providers to do for you should you become temporarily or permanently unable to express those wishes.

**Durable Power of Attorney** A legally binding document where you designate a health-care proxy to make your medical decisions in the event that you are unable to do so.

**Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR)** A specific type of advanced directive wherein doctors will not perform life saving measures should you fall into cardiac arrest. It is a good idea for anyone with a DNR order to have one on them at all times with the words “out-of-hospital DNR order” written on it.

**Health-Care Proxy** This person is your health care agent that can be assigned as your durable medical power of attorney, but does not have to be. They will carry out your medical wishes in the event that you are unable to.

**Living Will** A document that describes in full detail the medical care you wish to receive should you become incapacitated. This is not to be thought of as a substitute for a health-care proxy. Your health-care proxy should have a copy of your living will.

- It is important to start having these conversations with your loved ones as soon as possible in the event that a situation arises wherein decisions need to be made regarding possible life saving medical care.
- Keep in mind that end of life decision making is considered a fluid process and should be updated regularly. No one will know that you wanted to get rid of your DNR order unless you speak up.
- Please make it a point to have a detailed and deliberate conversation with your health-care proxy informing them of your wishes and that they are designated as such. It is also a good idea to have a back-up proxy should that person become unavailable.

For more information and assistance developing your own advanced directive, visit [www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org) and [www.mydirectives.com](http://www.mydirectives.com)