



Tool #1

How to Select Your Health Care Agent or Proxy

Name & Date _____

When you decide to pick someone to speak for you in a medical crisis, in case you are not able to speak for yourself, there are several things to think about. This tool will help you decide who the best person is. Usually it is best to name *one* person or agent to serve at a time, with at least one successor, or back-up person, in case the first person is not available when needed.

Compare up to 3 people with this tool. The persons best suited to be your Health Care Agents or Proxies rate well on these qualifications...

Name #1:		
Name #2:		
Name #3:		
		1. Meets the legal criteria in your state for acting as agent or proxy or representative? (This is a must! See next page.)
		2. Would be willing to speak on your behalf.
		3. Would be able to act on your wishes and separate his/her own feelings from yours.
		4. Lives close by or could travel to be at your side if needed.
		5. Knows you well and understands what's important to you.
		6. Could handle the responsibility.
		7. Will talk with you now about sensitive issues and will listen to your wishes.
		8. Will likely be available long into the future.
		9. Would be able to handle conflicting opinions between family members, friends, and medical personnel.
		10. Can be a strong advocate in the face of an unresponsive doctor or institution.

The person you choose to make health care decisions for you is known by different names in different states. This person is sometimes called a health care agent, proxy, representative, attorney-in-fact, surrogate, or even patient advocate.

Who Can't be a Proxy?

State rules for who may be a health care proxy vary, but the most common groups disqualified are these:

- ! Anyone under age 18.
- ! Your health care provider, including the owner or operator of a health or residential or community care facility serving you -- unless this person is your spouse or close relative.
- ! An employee of your health care provider -- unless this person is your spouse or close relative.

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOU PICK A HEALTH CARE PROXY?

- ! Talk to your proxy about the qualifications on the first page of this worksheet.
- ! Ask permission to name him or her as your proxy.
- ! Discuss your health care wishes and values and fears.
- ! Make sure your proxy gets an original copy of your advance directive.
- ! Tell family members and close friends who you picked.

This worksheet adapted by the American Bar Association's Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly from R. Pearlman, et. al., *Your Life Your Choices – Planning for Future Medical Decisions: How to Prepare a Personalized Living Will*, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Seattle, Washington

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