

CALIFORNIA ADVANCE HEALTH CARE DIRECTIVE: What It Is & Why You Need One

You're a responsible adult, so you already know about the **four must-have documents** everyone should keep updated. Here's a hint: Your Will, Revocable Trust, Financial Power of Attorney, and **Advance Directive & Durable Power of Attorney for Health**. If you're only familiar with wills and trusts, it's time to get on board with an advance directive to protect your wishes about health care.

Having an advance health care directive is important because it communicates your health care instructions in case you're unable to do so yourself. If you're in an accident or have a medical condition that makes it impossible for you to make your wishes known, this is the best way to make sure you'll get the treatment you want or prevent you from having someone else make crucial decisions for you.

According to the California Attorney General's Office, 70 percent of Americans would prefer to be with loved ones in their final days, yet only about 25 percent pass away at home. No matter where you are, if you're not able to communicate your wishes about medical care for any reason, you need an advance health care directive to protect you and see that your wishes are respected.

Not only should you have these documents prepared, they must also be reviewed periodically. Going through major life changes – retirement, spouse/partner loss, selling a business, etc. – makes it necessary to keep your vital papers updated.

Online tools make it easy to comply. Some offer impressive resources, but **take note: Your specific case may need review by your physician, attorney, or other professional.**

Advance Health Care Directives Explained

The advance directive is **not the same as your last will**, which describes what you wish to have done with your estate and assets after your death. **Nor is it the living trust**, which sets forth the conditions under which your assets are controlled by trustee while you're still alive.

The **advance health care directive, sometimes called a living will**, refers solely to medical decisions you won't be able to make for yourself in case you become incapacitated. It gives notice to your family, caregivers, and physicians about your wishes for end-of-life care, including how to handle life-saving treatments and organ donation.



The durable power of attorney for health and advance health care directive work jointly to make sure you receive the treatment and care you want. You need both to create a legally binding road map for your caregivers to follow. **Together they're referred to as your Advance Health Care Directive.**

The durable power of attorney gives your agent the authority to instruct doctors on the treatments you receive, while the advance directive describes your desires for care in case you're unable to make the determination yourself.

In California, multiple forms have been combined into the Advance Care Directive recognized by the State's Probate Code. You can view and download a sample [here](#).

Note too that if you executed a valid health care directive before July 1, 2000, the **California Probate Code** specifies that it remains in effect at your discretion.

How to Set Up Your Own Advance Care Directive

First of all, decide how you want to handle different medical possibilities. Do you object to CPR or other lifesaving measures? Are there drugs or treatments you won't accept? Will you donate your organs? These questions and more must be answered before you go any further.

Then complete your documents. In addition to the downloadable form referenced above, check out the resources at the end of this article for more information. Decide if you need to have your paperwork reviewed by your physician, attorney, or other professional.

Your signature doesn't have to be notarized because you're allowed to have it witnessed by two individuals not involved in your health care decisions instead, if that's your preference.

Your advance directive becomes valid as soon as it's witnessed or notarized, and doesn't expire until you decide you want to make a change. Store the documents in a safe place, and make them available to those who need to know.

Keep all your essential documents updated whenever major life changes make it necessary.

For the advance directive, invalidating it is as simple as destroying the outdated original. But be sure to collect all the copies and destroy them as well.

It's Easy & Help is Available

The following resources offer information and instructions, as well as documents for download. Download, complete, and have witnessed or notarized ~ easy as pie!

AARP provides California documents for free download with complete instructions [here](#).

[The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization](#) is another excellent resource for information and downloadable documents.

In Closing

California accepts documents valid in other states titled Living Will, etc. But be aware that other states or countries may not accept California's version. If you spend a lot of time in another locality, complete their documents also to be sure your wishes are respected no matter where you are.

Maintaining an advance directive is easy, inexpensive, and can be accomplished quickly. It's also extremely important so you're not left vulnerable if you can't communicate your medical wishes to others who may make different choices from your own.

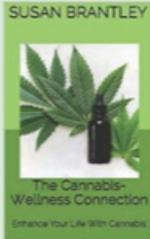


Make the decision to review ALL your vital documents at your earliest opportunity. You'll be glad you did!

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The complex block features a light green background. At the top, it says 'Available now at Amazon.com:'. Below this is a book cover for 'The Cannabis-Wellness Connection: Enhance Your Life With Cannabis' by Susan Brantley. The cover shows a green cannabis leaf and a dark bottle. Below the book cover, the title is repeated in a blue, italicized font. At the bottom, there is a line of text: 'The Cannabis-Wellness Connection: Guide to CBD Pet Care, is coming soon — stay tuned!'.