

HEALTH CARE PLANNING

MAKING SURE YOUR WISHES ARE FOLLOWED

You want to ensure that decisions about your health care, including end-of-life care, are made the way you want them to be made. You make decisions about your health care when you are able, but what happens if you cannot make or communicate decisions yourself?

If you have not prepared health care documents and important decisions must be made, Maryland law provides that critical decisions can be made by your surrogate decision-maker, based on a hierarchy of relatives according to relationship. But this order of priority does not fit everyone's situation and the person with priority may not be who you choose to make your health care decisions.

That is why every adult should execute a Medical Power of Attorney, a Living Will/Advanced Directive, and a HIPAA Authorization. The Medical Power of Attorney appoints a Health Care Agent, who makes decisions on your behalf and speaks for you if you are unable. The Living Will/Advanced Directive gives instructions on your end-of-life treatment preferences regarding medical interventions. The HIPAA Authorization allows for the release of protected health information to the person(s) you choose to make these medical decisions.

Like all estate planning documents, these should be reviewed periodically to ensure they are still appropriate for your situation. (For example, perhaps when you prepared your health care documents your children were too young to be assigned the role of decision-maker, but now they are the person(s) you would choose).

Contact us at jhyatt@estateplanningmatters.com, or visit our website at www.estateplanningmatters.com, to get information about health care planning as part of a comprehensive estate plan for yourself and your family.