

I Completed My Advance Directive; Now What???

Congratulations! You have taken a big step in preparing for your future. Now that you have filled in all the blanks, you need to take a few more steps to complete the process.

A word about the language used here: “Advance Directive” (AD) is used as a general term and includes Power of Attorney and Medical Directive.

Sign and date it in the presence of two witnesses. In order to be valid, Virginia law requires you to sign and date your AD in front of two people and those two people must also sign and date it. You all have to be in the room at the same time so that the witnesses actually see you signing the document. dLCV recommends that the witnesses be someone other than the person(s) you chose as your agent(s).

Get it notarized, or not. Virginia law does not require a Health Care AD to be notarized. dLCV recommends you do so, but it is optional.

Make and provide copies. Your AD only works if it is in the hands of the people who need to have it. Make copies for your health care professionals and your agent(s). Consider other people in your life and decide who would need to know your wishes in case of a health care crisis, such as family members, friends, Case Manager or Service Coordinator, pastor or spiritual advisor. Keep your own copy in a safe place where you can access it quickly and easily.

Register your AD. You can provide a copy of your AD to local hospitals by providing a copy to their patient registration department. You can also register your AD with the Virginia Advance Health Care Directive Registry. This is a free service and once you put your document on the registry, you will receive a wallet card you can carry so that anyone who needs access to it can see it (such as doctors and rescue personnel). The registry is located here:

<https://connectvirginia.org/adr/>

Keep track of all these copies! Keep a list of who has copies of your AD because if you ever need to change it or revoke it, you’ll need to let everyone know. dLCV has created a form for this purpose which can be found here: [Devin: provide hyperlink to the Copies form.]

Review your AD. Unless you put a time limitation on your AD, it is valid until you either revoke it or change it. Circumstances change over time and you should review your AD to make sure it still communicates your current wishes. dLCV recommends you review your AD any time one of these “D” situations occur: Death of a loved one: obviously, if the person was your agent, you’ll need to change your document, but even if this is not the case, a death often brings a new experience that may change your beliefs and feelings about your own health decisions. Divorce: just like death, divorce often creates a new dynamic that may change your previously held beliefs. Diagnosis or Decline in health: if you receive a new health diagnosis or your health worsens, check your AD to make sure it covers decisions for that situation. Decade: if you haven’t reviewed your AD in 10 years, take a look and make sure it is still accurate.