



Health care agent

A health care agent is a person who would make medical decisions and advocate for you. This role is only activated if you are unable to communicate. A health care agent does not have the authority to make financial decisions.

Choosing a health care agent is an important part of advance care planning. Advance care planning is the process of making decisions about your future medical needs in the event you are unable to speak for yourself.

Tell your loved ones who your health care agent is. Make sure your health care agent knows the names and contact information for your health care providers.

In Iowa, the legal advance directive form designating the health care agent is called the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPOAH). A DPOAH may be revoked (canceled) at any time either verbally or in writing. The form not only allows you to designate an agent, but also limits the type and scope of decisions they can make. Without the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, your next of kin, such as a spouse or adult son or daughter, will be given the responsibility.

What are qualities of a good health care agent?

- Someone close to you and whom you trust
- Understands your values
- Knows you and your wishes well
- Has the ability to make decisions in stressful situations
- An adult (18 or older)
- Is not afraid to ask questions and advocate for you

It is important your designated health care agent agrees to the responsibility. Give your health care agent and your provider a copy of your advance directives.

It is recommended you choose one health care agent and name an alternate in case that person is unavailable when decisions need to be made.