



## **ADVANCE CARE PLANNING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to **What Matters: Caring Conversations About End of Life.**

This project is designed to help you clarify your goals and wishes regarding your future healthcare choices through individually facilitated conversations.

The program provides facilitators, trained and certified by the acclaimed Respecting Choices© program of the Gundersen Health System, who are eager to work with you. There is no agenda from facilitators, and no preferred outcome of your choices.

We know you may have many questions in anticipation of this process. We've put together the following to answer some questions you may have.

### **WHAT IS ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?**

Advance care planning is the process of understanding possible future healthcare decisions; considering what you might want for yourself, taking into account your personal, cultural, religious and/or spiritual values; talking about these choices with your doctors and people close to you; and making a plan for future possible healthcare situations. Advance care planning is important at any age.

### **WHAT IS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?**

An advance directive is the plan you make for future healthcare that expresses your goals, values, and preferences for care. It can also designate a person you have chosen to make healthcare decisions for you if you cannot make them for yourself.

Your advance directive may be a formal, legal document, or you may choose to communicate your choices more informally in a letter or by simply having conversations with your loved ones and healthcare providers. In many circumstances, a formal, legal document that clearly reflects your goals and values may be the best way to ensure that your choices will be followed in the future.

As long as you are capable, you may change or revoke your advance directive at any time. It is a good idea to update your advance directive regularly, or when there are major health or life changes. Make copies of your advance directive, distribute them to loved ones, keep one on file with your doctor. Always keep your advance directive wallet card with you.

## WHAT IS A HEALTHCARE PROXY?

You can authorize someone close to you to serve as your healthcare agent (also known as a healthcare proxy). Your agent would need to make decisions for you should you become incapable of making your own healthcare choices, for example in the case of a sudden injury or acute illness. This process will help you identify a person to serve as your agent and make sure they understand your goals and values.

## I ALREADY HAVE A HEALTHCARE AGENT/PROXY. WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN “WHAT MATTERS?”

Many people have designated an agent or proxy without really considering or discussing what their goals and values are and how that might affect future healthcare choices. This lack of clarity can lead to confusion and conflict that can be devastating in the case of a medical crisis and create additional hardship for your loved ones. Having these conversations now will help you and your agent gain a deeper understanding of your wishes, should difficult decision-making be necessary in the future.

If you already have appointed a healthcare agent and would like to bring them to a meeting with a facilitator, please feel free to do so.

## HOW LONG WILL THE PROCESS TAKE?

This process may only take a short period of time or it may take many months. Your conversations with a facilitator will most likely take under an hour. You may want to return for another conversation with your facilitator after more reflection and conversations with your loved ones and/or your doctors. What is most important is that you begin now and take the time you need to understand, reflect, discuss, and make a plan that will work best for you and those closest to you.

## WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Should you wish to schedule a first conversation, email [info@whatmattersny.org](mailto:info@whatmattersny.org), or call **646.896.3967**.

For more information, visit [whatmattersny.org](http://whatmattersny.org).

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