



# So Now You Are a Medical Decision-Maker



A Colorado guide to serving as a medical agent, health care proxy, or advance directive decision-maker

If someone has named you to help with health care decisions, your role is to speak with doctors, understand treatment options, and honor the person's wishes when they cannot speak for themselves. This brochure explains the basics and offers practical guidance before a crisis occurs.



## You may be acting under:

- ◆ Medical Power of Attorney
- ◆ Advance Directive
- ◆ HIPAA Authorization
- ◆ Guardian nomination or court appointment



## Before a crisis

Talk early, gather documents, learn the person's wishes, and know who to call.



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# The Medical Decision-Maker's Roadmap

Practical guidance for serving as a medical agent or health care proxy

Your role is to help a loved one communicate with health care providers and receive treatment that matches their wishes, values, and best interests.



## 1. Confirm your authority

Locate the medical power of attorney, advance directive, HIPAA release, or any court appointment so you understand your legal role.



## 2. Learn the person's wishes

Follow known instructions, values, religious beliefs, and quality-of-life preferences whenever they are reasonably available.



## 3. Access medical information

Use HIPAA authorizations and speak with providers so you can understand the diagnosis, treatment options, and likely outcomes.



## 4. Talk with doctors

Ask questions about benefits, burdens, risks, alternatives, and prognosis so you can make informed choices.



## 5. Use the right decision standard

First use substituted judgment—what the person would choose. If their wishes are unknown, act in their best interests.



## 6. Understand end-of-life decisions

Be prepared to discuss CPR, ventilators, artificial nutrition and hydration, pain control, hospice, and comfort-focused care.



## 7. Review organ donation and final instructions

Honor any written directions regarding organ donation, anatomical gifts, or other disposition-related instructions.



## 8. Manage family conflict

Communicate clearly, share appropriate updates, and keep the focus on the patient's wishes rather than outside pressure.



## 9. Prepare before a crisis

Keep copies of documents, provider names, medication lists, insurance information, and emergency contacts in one place.



## 10. Keep records and ask for help

Document important conversations and major decisions. Seek legal guidance if authority is unclear or conflict escalates.



## Records to Keep

- Advance directive or medical POA
- HIPAA authorization
- Provider and hospital list
- Medication list
- Insurance information
- Emergency contacts
- Notes of key conversations



## When to Call Chapman Law

- Unclear or conflicting documents
- Family disagreement about treatment
- Questions about life support or placement
- Need coordination with a guardian or financial agent
- Concerns about honoring the patient's wishes



*When in doubt, return to the patient's known wishes, values, and dignity.*



Act with compassion. Communicate clearly. Document carefully.  
**You are making a difference every day.**



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