

GETTING YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER

Topic #15: Health Care Power Of Attorney

A health care power of attorney, also referred to as a durable power of attorney, is a legal document that appoints someone of your choosing to make any and all health related decisions for you in the event you are unable to speak or care for yourself. If you are a caregiver for your parents, it is advisable to have them designate you or another family member to hold the health care power of attorney for them.

Appointing someone to serve as your “agent” is not a decision to be made lightly. And, it is advisable to select a successor in the event your primary agent is not available when needed.

To help make your decision, Meridian At Home has developed a list of key questions to consider:

First, let’s consider how to select a health care agent or proxy.

Selecting A Health Care Agent (or Proxy):

- 1. Is the person age 18 or older, and not your health care provider or an employee of your health care provider? The only exception is if the health care provider is your spouse or a relative.**
- 2. Is the person willing and comfortable speaking on your behalf?**
- 3. Would the person be able to act on your wishes and separate his or her own feelings from yours?**
- 4. Does the person live close by or able to travel to be at your side if needed?**
- 5. Does the person know you well and understand what’s important to you?**
- 6. Is this a person you trust with your life?**
- 7. Is this someone you can talk to about sensitive issues?**
- 8. Can this person handle difficult situations such as conflicting opinions among family members, friends, and medical professionals?**
- 9. Can this person advocate for you in any situation?**
- 10. Is this person willing to serve as your agent?**

Once you help your loved one decide on you or a family member to be named proxy, make sure you or the other family member gives permission. Be sure the designated person (or you) understands her responsibilities and the level of authority she is being given. You or the designated proxy can be given as much or as little authority as desired by your loved one, and a designation as Health Care Power of Attorney can be revoked at any time.

Tell family members and friends who your loved one has chosen, and if it is you, make sure you (or the designated proxy) have copies of the document.

A Health Care Power Of Attorney, combined with a *Living Will*, is a legal tool that makes up an *Advance Medical Directive* ---a preferred legal tool for health related decisions. Each tool works in tandem to insure your personal wishes are carried out as you have instructed.

With an understanding of these legal tools, you can be prepared to help your loved one make decisions about important health care matters.

If you have any questions about your health, or the continued health of your loved ones, contact us. Meridian At Home Advisors specialize in listening to your health care concerns and identifying the services and technologies that will allow you or a person close to you to continue to lead a healthy, independent life at home. Our advisors will gladly arrange for a registered nurse to conduct a free, in-home consultative assessment. Call us toll-free at 1-800-894-6885. You can also click on [Connect with Meridian At Home](#) to have one of our advisors contact you at a convenient time. Meridian At Home, Where you want to be.