

# DPOA For Health Care



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## **What is it?**

A Durable Power of Attorney (DPOA) for Health Care is a legal document that allows you to appoint another person to make health care decisions for you in the event that you are no longer able to speak for yourself. This person is called your “patient advocate.” A DPOA for Health Care should not be confused with a general Durable Power of Attorney or a DPOA for finances or property which gives a person of your choosing the power to sign legal documents and make financial decisions for you.

## **Why do I need one?**

By selecting a patient advocate, you will ensure that someone you trust will oversee your future health care decisions. This is particularly important for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia. Advance directives such as Living Wills and DPOAs for Health Care allow you to plan ahead and make sure that your wishes are followed. It can also help ease the burden of decision-making that may fall upon your family members in the future.

## **What if I am able to make my own decisions?**

Your health care agent makes decisions for you *only* if you are no longer able to make health care decisions for yourself.

## **Who should I select as my DPOA for Health Care?**

You should choose a person that you trust. Most people select a spouse, partner, family member or close friend. If possible, you should choose someone who lives close to you in case he/she needs to direct your treatment for an extended period of time. You will also want to discuss your health care wishes with this person to make sure he/she is willing to act on your behalf. You can also write your wishes down and include them with the DPOA document.

## **Should I choose an alternate DPOA for Health Care?**

Yes. You should select at least one alternate person to act as your patient advocate in case your first choice is unable to make decisions for you.

## **What decisions can a patient advocate make?**

In most cases, the person you select can make all decisions regarding your health care. This includes the right to refuse or consent to treatment; the right to

access medical records; the right to withdraw or withhold life-sustaining treatment; the right to make arrangements for home health care or admit you to a hospital or nursing home; and the power to make anatomical donations.

**Do I have to go to a lawyer to set up a DPOA for Health Care?**

No. However, the document must be in writing, signed by you, and witnessed by two other adults. Free DPOA for Health Care forms are available from a number of different organizations including the MADRC, Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, and most hospitals and doctor's offices. All research participants at MADRC are required to designate a patient advocate before enrolling in a study. This can help ensure that your wishes are protected throughout the duration of the study.

**Do I still need a DPOA for Health Care if I have a Living Will?**

It is a good idea to have both. A Living Will allows you to state your wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment and end-of-life care. A patient advocate will make sure that these wishes are honored.

**How do I get a DPOA for Health Care form from the MADRC?**

Forms are generally given to all prospective research participants at the time of enrollment. If you did not receive one, please contact Nakia Johnson, recruitment coordinator, at (734) 615-8462.