



MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
PALLIATIVE CARE AND  
END OF LIFE COALITION

## Advance Care Planning... It's Too Soon, Until It's Too Late

### What is Advance Care Planning?

- The process of making and documenting decisions about the medical care you would want to receive if you become unable to speak for yourself is called Advance Care Planning.
- An advance directive, the product of Advance Care Planning, is comprised of the appointment of a health care agent and a Living Will.
- Decisions about end-of-life care in an advance directive are based on your personal values, preferences, and discussions with your loved ones.
- The advance directives names your health care agent, who will speak and act for you if you experience an accident or illness that leaves you unable to express your wishes.
- A Living Will documents your choices about medical treatment including interventions, nutrition and pain control.

### Why Does Advance Care Planning Matter?

- Over 50% of people in Maryland die in a hospital or nursing home.
- Over half of the population will not be able to make their own decisions at the end of their lives.
- Less than 1/3 of people in Maryland have completed an Advance Directive.
- Families often cannot agree on treatment during stressful times.
- In the U.S., the care people receive at the end-of-life doesn't always align with care people say they want.

### A Health Care Agent Can...

- Can be anyone over the age of 18
- Can be a family member, loved one or close friend
- Is authorized to speak ONLY if you are unable to speak for yourself
- Is someone who:
  - you trust; knows you well; will advocate on your behalf; will honor your wishes
- Can authorize the use of pain medication in amounts necessary to control pain in end-of-life situations, even if such medication may shorten the patient's life
- Can authorize the use of, withholding of, or termination of artificial feeding and hydration
- Can authorize any other treatment to be administered, withheld or terminated in accordance with the Agent's understanding of the wishes and desires of the patient

### Other Considerations That Can Be Part of an Advance Directive:

- Issues unique to you
- Religious beliefs that relate to specific medical issues
- Preferences for where you want to be cared for
- Decisions/instructions about burial/cremation

### An Advance Directive Allows You To...

- Maintain control - directly or through health care agent
- Direct desired results
- Help reduce family strife

*Thank you to  
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