
Planning in Advance for Your Medical Treatment

Your Right to Decide About Treatment

Among the rights of a nursing home resident is that of choice, or self-determination. A nursing home resident has the right to:

- request medical treatment
- consent to medical treatment
- refuse medical treatment, including life sustaining treatment
- have treatment stopped if it is no longer desired

Planning in Advance

A person can develop an illness that makes it impossible to make decisions about treatment or express one's wishes to the health care team. Examples of such illnesses are certain strokes and Alzheimer's disease, as well as many critical illnesses. It is important to plan in advance and make your doctor and family or close friends aware of your wishes.

In New York State, you can appoint someone you trust to decide about treatment if you become unable to decide for yourself. Filling out a Health Care Proxy is a good way to protect your wishes; Isabella encourages you to do so and will supply you the form.

The Health Care Proxy form has room on which to leave special instructions for caregivers, were one to become too ill to make decisions about care. People sometimes leave directions about what kind of care they would not want if they became terminally ill or fell into a coma; examples would be cardiac resuscitation, ventilator care, kidney dialysis, artificial feeding or hydration (especially feeding tubes), and even antibiotics.

In New York State it is particularly important to include on the Health Care Proxy form a request for no artificial feeding or hydration, if that is desired.

In addition some residents, on their health care proxies, decide that for the very frail person the risks and stresses of hospitalization outweigh the benefits. In this case an instruction for "no hospitalization" may be given. Of course, for many residents, hospitalization when indicated remains appropriate.

Finally, Isabella offers palliative care. This model of care stresses comfort over cure (not less care) for people who have highly symptomatic, incurable illnesses. Examples include Alzheimer's disease, late-stage cancer, and heart and lung failure. Residents who elect palliative care receive aggressive treatment of symptoms such as pain and all appropriate therapy, including hospitalization if necessary, to achieve comfort.

We have developed pamphlets discussing DNR orders, tube feeding, hospitalization and palliative care, and encourage you to read them. Our doctors, nurse practitioners, and social workers are available to discuss these issues.

Please fill out the form available at the end of the Welcome package.