

Vermont Advance Directive Week 2025 (April 13th-19th)

Community Toolkit



Vermont Advance Directive Week is dedicated to sharing resources and information to educate and inspire Vermonters to make advance care plans for their healthcare. Find out how you can participate and get free resources to share with your community.

What is advance care planning?

Advance care planning (ACP) is an ongoing process of conversations and documentation of your healthcare values and preferences. It includes talking with your clinicians, friends, and loved ones about what matters most to you in your healthcare, as well as using legal tools like advance directives and medical orders to formalize your plan. Whether or not you have an advance directive, you can have conversations with your friends and loved ones about your priorities and preferences for your healthcare.

What are advance directives (AD)?

Advance directives are legal documents that provide guidance for your family, friends, and health care providers in times of critical illness or serious injury. Previously called **Living Wills** or **Treatment Directives**, these documents have two parts: (1) appoint a healthcare agent *and* (2) describe your treatment preferences or limitations for your agent and healthcare providers to follow. No-one else can write your advance directive for you, and what you say in your advance directive will be used to guide your medical care even if you do not appoint a healthcare agent.

What is a healthcare agent (HCA)?

Your healthcare agent is the person you appoint in your advance directive to make medical decisions for you if you cannot speak for yourself. Your healthcare agent must be 18 or older, and **cannot** be your doctor/nurse or other paid caregiver. Also called a **healthcare proxy** or **durable power of attorney for healthcare**, your agent should be someone you trust to speak for you and advocate for your priorities and limitations. Your agent will tell your healthcare providers what you would say if you were able to speak for yourself. Healthcare agents are not allowed to change what you have said in your advance directive.

Each year, Vermont Advance Directive Week coincides with National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD) on April 16th. NHDD is coordinated by [The Conversation Project](#) which provides resources to participants in all 50 states and more than 20 countries.

Check out who has pledged to participate this year: [Join the Movement \(NHDD\)](#)

Advance Care Planning Tools

These documents are workbooks and conversation guides to help you think about what matters to you for your healthcare. They are a great way to think about your priorities and help you communicate what matters most to the people in your life. VEN recommends using these tools before you complete an advance directive. You can also share these with your appointed healthcare agent or attach them to your advance directive to give more information about your decisions.

- [Patient Values Questionnaire \(VEN\)](#)
- [Medical Situations & Treatment Worksheet \(VEN\)](#)
- [Conversation Starter Guide \(The Conversation Project\)](#)
- [What Matters to Me Workbook \(The Conversation Project\)](#)
- [How to Talk to Your Doctor \(The Conversation Project\)](#)
- [A Patient's Guide to Difficult Conversations \(SpeakSooner\)](#)
- [Hello Game \(Common Practice\)](#) (purchase required)
- Full list of ACP Tools on the VEN Website: <https://vtethicsnetwork.org/medical-decision-making/how-to-begin/helpful-tools-for-decision-making>

Advance Directive Forms

Vermont does not have a specific form for advance directives. Any properly signed and witnessed document is considered a legal advance directive. It must be signed by the individual and two adult witnesses. Witnesses cannot be your spouse, parents, siblings, children or grandchildren. Vermont does not require a notary.

- [VT AD Agent Only Form \(Appointment of a Healthcare Agent Only\)](#)
- [VT AD Short Form \(Appoint an Agent & Short Treatment Directive\)](#)
- [VT AD Long Form \(Appoint an Agent & Detailed Treatment Directive\)](#)

Other National Forms (all recognized in Vermont)

- [PREPARE for your Care](#)
- [My Living Voice](#)
- [Thinking Ahead Workbook](#)
- [Five Wishes](#) (purchase required)

How to participate in Vermont Advance Directive Week:

- Complete your own advance directive & share copies with your healthcare agent, loved ones, and your healthcare provider.
- Register your advance directive with the Vermont Advance Directive Registry.
- Tell someone you know about why you completed your advance directive.
- Start a conversation with friends or loved ones about what matters to you regarding your healthcare. If you couldn't speak for yourself, what do those close to you need to know?
- Attend or host local events. Sign up for the [Vermont Ethics Network Newsletter](#) to see what events are happening in your area or check out our [News and Events page](#).

Community Event Ideas:

Who's Hosting?
For individuals - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite friends and loved ones to chat over tea or coffee about why you completed your advance directive.• A signing & witnessing party - bring your advance directives and sign and witness them with friends!
For community organizers - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A film/documentary screening at your community center or library (<i>film/documentary ideas below</i>)• Staffing a table to share advance care planning tools and forms• Inviting a guest speaker for a presentation on advance care planning
For healthcare centers and hospitals - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trainings for staff on how to begin advance care planning conversations (request from VEN or check out pre-recorded resources here)• Promoting staff to complete their own advance directives with free resources• Set up a table in the lobby with information about advance care planning and free advance directive forms (get free Taking Steps Booklets)

Films, Interviews and Documentaries to Start Conversations about Medical Decisions & End of Life:

- [Sister Úna Lived a Good Death \(PBS: Independent Lens\)](#)
- [Late Life: A Conversation with Atul Gawande \(Watch on Youtube\)](#)
- [The Descendants \(on Amazon Prime\)](#)
- [Short Videos from the Conversation Project](#)

Discussion Guide for Films/Documentaries ([download here](#))

Promotional Materials

- Available on the Vermont Ethics Network Website [here](#).

Have more questions? Email Taylor Murray (VEN Advance Care Planning Program Manager) at tmurray@vtethicsnetwork.org.

[More Ideas from The Conversation Project \(National Healthcare Decisions Day\)](#)