

A CLIENT'S GUIDE TO CHOOSING AN HEALTHCARE POWER OF ATTORNEY



DECISION FACTORS

- ✓ Who do you trust with your life?
- ✓ Who can be easily reached when needed?
- ✓ Who will follow your wishes?
- ✓ What does your family say?
- ✓ Do you have a living will?
- ✓ Are you authorizing one person at a time?
- ✓ Are you giving joint authority?

HELP YOUR DOCTOR, YOUR FAMILY, AND YOURSELF

When you need medical care, your doctor is required to get your permission before beginning treatment. That permission can be difficult or even impossible to get if you are incapacitated or unconscious. If that's the case, most hospitals will require a signed document authorizing a third person to decide on your behalf.

Choosing your health care power of attorney can be difficult. Asking someone to make decisions about your healthcare isn't like asking them to manage your checkbook. If you're struggling with appointing someone, the best first step is to ask your family members who they think is a good choice. Then you can use the list of factors below and to the left to help finalize your decision.

JOINT VS. INDIVIDUAL AUTHORITY

Perhaps the most overlooked factor to consider is whether to appoint one person or multiple people at the same time. The simplest choice is to appoint only one person because they can make decisions without needing to consult the others.

When you appoint multiple people, you should always make sure that they are in agreement. You might appoint three individuals for a majority vote or a unanimous decision. Either way, it's important to make sure everyone you appoint is in the loop if you want to avoid conflict among your family members. Another thing you can do to simplify the process is to make some hard choices yourself ahead of time.

MAKE THEIR DECISIONS EASIER

Sometimes, family members don't want to have to make the really hard decisions. It can be a heavy burden to decide whether or not to 'pull the plug.' Luckily, you can ease the decision-making process ahead of time by including a living will in your health care power of attorney. If you take the really hard choices out of their hands, your family members might be more willing to act as your agent for health care decisions.

This brochure is an educational device and should not be treated as legal advice. Always seek the advice of an attorney licensed in your state before making decisions about your estate plan.



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