



WHAT MATTERS—ADVANCE CARE PLANNING GUIDE **BEING PREPARED IN THE TIME OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major changes to our lives—sheltering in place, physical distancing, new routines—and increased concerns about receiving the medical care we would need and want if we become seriously ill.

In these uncertain times, one thing we can control is who will speak for us if we become unable to speak for ourselves. It is more essential than ever that the important people in your life understand what matters most to you should medical decisions need to be made on your behalf.

Here are the steps to take:

1. Consider what your health care wishes would be. The questions on the following page may help you articulate what matters most to you.

2. Decide whom you will designate as your health care agent. Remember, your care agent is someone who can speak for you if, and only if, you become unable to speak for yourself.

3. Complete a New York State Health Care Proxy document and have your signature witnessed by two individuals. (Special practices for remote witnessing are now permissible during this time of enforced social distancing.) Under New York State law, you may name one individual (and an alternate if you wish) whom you trust to make medical decisions on your behalf.

4. Communicate your wishes and share copies of your health care proxy with your agent (and alternate) and other important people in your life—family members, friends, neighbors, your physician, and lawyer. Keep a copy in an easy-to-access place (e.g., in your wallet/purse, on the refrigerator, and/or next to the front door) in case of emergency.

5. What to bring with you to the hospital:

- Identification (preferably photo ID)
- Medical insurance information

- Smartphone, laptop or tablet, and chargers. Many hospitals are not allowing visitors, so these devices will help you communicate with your important people.
- Your completed Health Care Proxy form, which includes contact information for your designated agent and any additional instructions
- List of medications you are taking, including dosages, allergies, and pre-existing medical conditions
- Contact information for your doctor and other important people in your life

What Matters is here to help you prepare and walk you through these steps. Please reach out to us at info@whatmattersny.org or call **646.896.3697**.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The following questions may help you think through and articulate what matters most to you and what your health care wishes are. You may want to write your specific preferences, concerns, and wishes on a separate page, which should then be initialed, dated, and stapled to your health care proxy form.

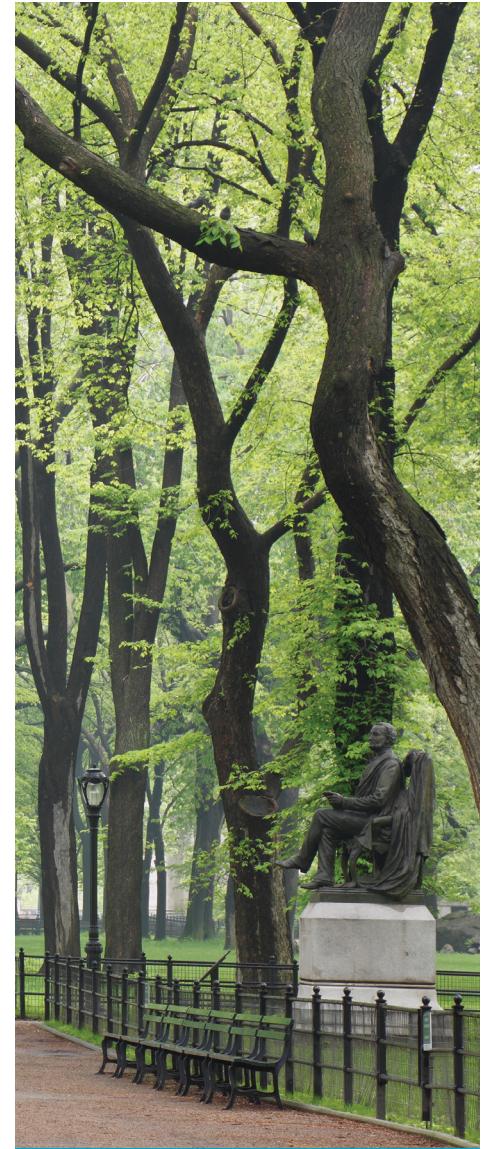
And then, discuss your wishes with your agent, alternate, and other important people in your life.

SPECIFIC TO COVID-19

- What would be most important to you (e.g., being comfortable (hospice or palliative care), trying all possible treatments, including intensive care and intubation)?
- What are you most worried about if you become infected with COVID-19 (e.g., being alone, being in pain, being a burden, caring for your children)?
- What is helping you through this difficult time (e.g., family, friends, clergy, my faith, my pet, listening to music, meditation)?
- If you became very sick with COVID-19, would you prefer to stay where you live or go to the hospital?
- What sort of quality of life would be unacceptable to you (e.g., being permanently bed-bound or neurologically devastated, indignity and suffering, depending on others for personal care)?

GENERAL

- What is most important to you in your life (e.g., family, the ability to live independently, the ability to write and read)?
- What makes your life meaningful (e.g., being with the important people in your life, your work, your volunteerism, your faith, dancing, being outdoors)?
- What experience(s) have you had with someone you know who had a serious or life-threatening illness or injury and was unable to communicate? How might that affect what you want for yourself in that type of situation?
- Are there religious beliefs or practices that help you cope in this situation?



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