



# Your Health. Your Care. Your Plan.

*Advance Care Planning Guide*

**ST. CROIX<sup>®</sup>**  
HOSPICE

***“I have a healthcare directive not because I have a serious illness, but because I have a family.”***

-Dr. Ira Byock, author and palliative care physician



# What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance Care Planning means **making important decisions about the medical care** you want to receive if you are unable to speak for yourself, and doctors and family members are making decisions for you. The Advance Care Planning process includes thinking and talking with loved ones about your end-of-life wishes.

# Why Make an Advance Care Plan?

Advance Care Planning shouldn't wait until you are elderly or experience a health crisis. Everyone over age 18 should have plans in place.

## Studies show Advance Care Planning:

- Reduces aggressive treatments and hospitalizations
- Increases the likelihood that you receive end-of-life care in keeping with your wishes
- Lessens anxiety and stress for family members and loved ones
- Leads to improved access to palliative and hospice services

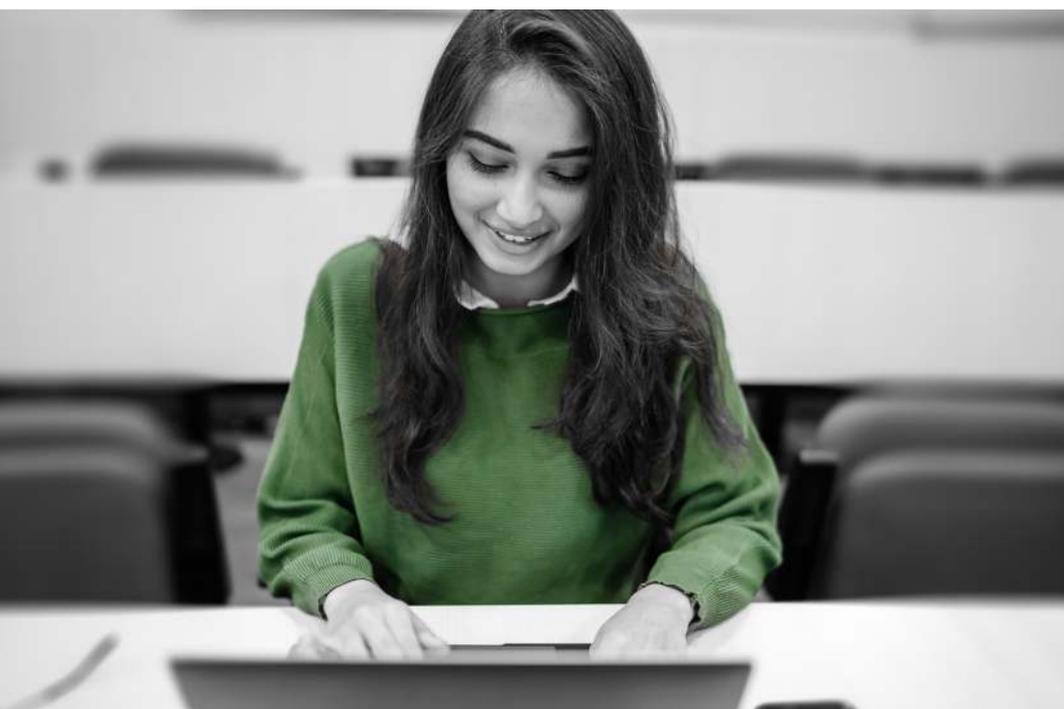
# Where do I begin?

Start the Advance Care Planning process by talking with family members about what your care wishes would be in a medical emergency and at the end of life. Conversations are best started while you are in good health and should include things like emergency treatments, comfort care and your personal values. You can also talk with your doctor about your current health and advance care planning decisions that may come up.



# Things to Consider When Making Your Plan

- Who would I choose to speak for me, if I were unable to speak for myself?
- When would I want to stop life-sustaining treatment and begin comfort care?
- What forms of physical, emotional and spiritual comforts are important to me?
- What do I want family members to know about my end-of-life wishes?



# My Advance Care Plan Checklist

- ✓ **Start talking about it.** Even though it can be difficult, talking about your Advance Care Plan early is important for both you and your loved ones.
- ✓ **Sign legal documents.\*** Choose a healthcare proxy (see page 8) and complete a living will (see page 9).
- ✓ **Make copies.** Share copies of your legal documents with doctors you see regularly. Bring copies with you to any unplanned hospital visits. Provide copies to your healthcare proxy.
- ✓ **File papers in a safe place.** Make sure trusted family members know the location of your advance care plan documents.
- ✓ **Update your plan.** Don't forget to update your plan if your state of residence, personal preferences or health circumstances change.
- ✓ **Tell loved ones.** Once you have made your advance care plan and signed legal documents, inform family members about your decisions and wishes.

\*Call the U.S. Administration on Aging's Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 for help finding your state's advance directive forms.

# Choosing Your Healthcare Proxy

Part of making an Advance Care Plan includes granting a healthcare proxy (or agent) legal authority to make medical decisions if you are no longer able to speak for yourself. Choose someone who:

- Respects your personal beliefs and values, including your end of life preferences
- Is a trusted family member or friend
- Can remain focused in emotional situations
- Is available if an urgent medical decision arises
- Can stand up for you
- Is comfortable asking difficult questions of doctors and nurses—even when they are busy



# Advance Care Planning Terms

**Advance directives:** Legal documents that inform your care team and family members of your healthcare preferences.

**Types of advance directives include:**

**Durable Power of Attorney:** This document designates a healthcare proxy (or agent) to make medical decisions for you if you are near death or unresponsive.

**Living Will:** A living will states the medical treatment you want or do not want if you are unable to speak for yourself.

**DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) order:** This order tells your care team not to perform CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) to keep you alive if your heart stops beating.

**DNI (Do Not Intubate) order:** This order is similar to a DNR and tells your care team you do not want assistance of a breathing machine.

**POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) or MOLST (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment):** This allows you to give directions to your care team if a medical emergency occurs. It is created for patients in serious advanced illness and must be signed, prior to an emergency situation, by a doctor or nurse practitioner.

# When is it Time for Hospice?

Deciding when it's time for hospice is an important part of your advance care plan. For people with terminal illnesses, starting hospice early can mean:

- More quality time with family, friends and loved ones
- Reduced need for invasive procedures
- Emotional, spiritual and physical support for patients, families and caregivers
- Relief from stress and anxiety
- Less likelihood of hospitalization



# About St. Croix Hospice

Originally founded in Minnesota, St. Croix Hospice is named after the St. Croix River. Like life, rivers are not always easy to navigate and it's good to have a guide to help you along the way. St. Croix Hospice offers experienced and compassionate hospice care to help patients and their families make the most of their time together.

## The St. Croix Hospice Difference

Not all hospice services are the same. St. Croix Hospice is focused solely on providing the best possible hospice care to our patients and their families. We work to understand the unique personal wishes of each individual, respecting personal choices while providing comfort, care and dignity during this important time.

# Hospice:

It's not a place.  
It's a plan.

**ST. CROIX<sup>®</sup>**  
HOSPICE

24/7 availability including nights,  
weekends and holidays

Care wherever you call home

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