

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING WILL TO LIVE DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY

*(Please read the document itself before reading this.
It will help you better understand the suggestions.)*

YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO FILL OUT ANY PART OF THIS “WILL TO LIVE” OR ANY OTHER DOCUMENT SUCH AS A LIVING WILL OR DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE. NO ONE MAY FORCE YOU TO SIGN THIS DOCUMENT OR ANY OTHER OF ITS KIND.

The Will to Live form starts from the principle that the presumption should be for life. If you sign it without writing any “SPECIAL CONDITIONS,” you are giving directions to your health care provider(s) and health care agent¹ to do their best to preserve your life.

Some people may wish to continue certain types of medical treatment when they are terminally ill and in the final stages of life. Others may not.

If you wish to refuse some specific medical treatment, the Will to Live form provides space to do so (“SPECIAL CONDITIONS”). You may make special conditions for your treatment when your death is imminent, meaning you will live no more than a week even if given all available medical treatment; or when you are incurably terminally ill, meaning you will live no more than three months even if given all available medical treatment. There is also space for you to write down special conditions for circumstances you describe yourself.

The important thing for you to remember if you choose to fill out any part of the “SPECIAL CONDITIONS” sections of the Will to Live is that you must be very specific in listing what treatments you do not want. Some examples of how to be specific will be given shortly, or you may ask your physician what types of treatment might be expected in your specific case.

Why is it important to be specific? Because, given the pro-euthanasia views widespread in society and particularly among many (not all) health care providers, there is great danger that a vague description of what you do not want will be misunderstood or distorted so as to deny you treatment that you do want.

¹ Some states use the terms “attorney in fact,” “surrogate,” “designee,” and “representative” instead of “agent.” They are synonymous for purposes of these suggestions.

Many in the medical profession as well as in the courts are now so committed to the quality of life ethic that they take as a given that patients with severe disabilities are better off dead and would prefer not to receive either life-saving measures or nutrition and hydration. So pervasive is this “consensus” that it is accurate to say that in practice it is no longer true that the “presumption is for life” but rather for death. In other words, instead of assuming that a now incompetent patient would want to receive treatment and care in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, the assumption has virtually become that since any “reasonable” person would want to exercise a “right to die,” treatment and care should be withheld or withdrawn unless there is evidence to the contrary. The Will to Live is intended to maximize the chance of providing that evidence.

It is important to remember that you are writing a legal document, not holding a conversation, and not writing a moral textbook. The language you or a religious or moral leader might use in discussing what is and is not moral to refuse is, from a legal standpoint, often much too vague. Therefore, it is subject to misunderstanding or deliberate abuse.

The person you appoint as your health care agent may understand general terms in the same way you do. But remember that the person you appoint may die, or become incapacitated, or simply be unavailable when decisions must be made about your health care. If any of these happens, a court might appoint someone else you don’t know in that person’s place. Also remember that since the agent has to follow the instructions you write in this form, a health care provider could try to persuade a court that the agent isn’t really following your wishes. A court could overrule your agent’s insistence on treatment in cases in which the court interprets any vague language you put in your “Will to Live” less protectively than you meant it.

So, for example, do not simply say you don’t want “extraordinary treatment.” Whatever the value of that language in moral discussions, there is so much debate over what it means legally that it could be interpreted very broadly by a doctor or a court. For instance, it might be interpreted to require starving you to death when you have a disability, even if you are in no danger of death if you are fed.

For the same reason, do not use language rejecting treatment which has a phrase like “excessive pain, expense or other excessive burden.” Doctors and courts may have a very different definition of what is “excessive” or a “burden” than you do. Do not use language that rejects treatment that “does not offer a reasonable hope of benefit.” “Benefit” is a legally vague term. If you had a significant disability, a health care provider or court might think you would want no medical treatment at all, since many doctors and judges unfortunately believe there is no “benefit” to life with a severe disability.

What sort of language is specific enough if you wish to write exclusions? Here are some examples of things you might--or might not--want to list under one or more of the “Special Conditions” described on the form. Remember that any of these will prevent treatment ONLY under the circumstances--such as when death is imminent--described in the “Special Condition” you list it under. (The examples are not meant to be all inclusive--just samples of the type of thing you might want to write.)

“Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).” (If you would like CPR in some but not all circumstances when you are terminally ill, you should try to be still more specific: for example,

you might write “CPR if cardiopulmonary arrest has been caused by my terminal illness or a complication of it.” This would mean that you would still get CPR if, for example, you were the victim of smoke inhalation in a fire.) “Organ transplants.” (Again, you could be still more specific, rejecting, for example, just a “heart transplant.”)

“Surgery that would not cure me, would not improve either my mental or my physical condition, would not make me more comfortable, and would not help me to have less pain, but would only keep me alive longer.”

“A treatment that will itself cause me severe, intractable, and long-lasting pain but will not cure me.”

Pain Relief

Under the “General Presumption for Life,” of your Will to Live, you will be given medication necessary to control any pain you may have “as long as the medication is not used in order to cause my death.” This means that you may be given pain medication that has the secondary, but unintended, effect of shortening your life. If this is not your wish, you may want to write something like one of the following under the third set of “Special Conditions” (the section for conditions you describe yourself):

“I would like medication to relieve my pain but only to the extent the medication would not seriously threaten to shorten my life.” OR

“I would like medication to relieve my pain but only to the extent it is known, to a reasonable medical certainty, that it will not shorten my life.”

Think carefully about any special conditions you decide to write in your “Will to Live.” You may want to show them to your intended agent and a couple of other people to see if they find them clear and if they mean the same thing to them as they mean to you. Remember that how carefully you write may literally be a matter of life or death--your own.

AFTER WRITING DOWN YOUR SPECIAL CONDITIONS, IF ANY, YOU SHOULD MARK OUT THE REST OF THE BLANK LINES LEFT ON THE FORM FOR THEM (JUST AS YOU DO AFTER WRITING OUT THE AMOUNT ON A CHECK) TO PREVENT ANY DANGER THAT SOMEBODY OTHER THAN YOU COULD WRITE IN SOMETHING ELSE.

IT IS WISE TO REVIEW YOUR WILL TO LIVE PERIODICALLY TO ENSURE THAT IT STILL GIVES THE DIRECTIONS YOU WANT FOLLOWED.

How to use the Alabama Will to Live Form

SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

1. This document allows you to designate (name) a health care proxy who will make health care decisions for you whenever you are unable to make them for yourself. It also allows you to give instructions concerning medical treatment decisions that the health care proxy must follow. Any competent adult person (age 19 or older) may designate a health care proxy through this document.
2. To designate a healthcare proxy through this document, you must sign and date this document in the presence of two or more witnesses who are at least 19 years old. (If you are unable to sign and date the document yourself, you may direct someone to do it for you in your presence.) The two witnesses must sign the document in your presence and in each other's presence.
3. The witnesses must be at least 19 years old. The witnesses can not be the person who signed the document at your direction, if you could not sign it yourself, related to you by blood or marriage, entitled to any part of your estate under any existing will or similar instrument or by the laws of succession of your state, or directly financially responsible for your medical care.
4. Your health care proxy should be at least 19 years of age. Your health care proxy may not be your health care provider or a nonrelative employee of your health care provider. A health care provider is any person or entity who is licensed, certified, registered, or otherwise authorized to provide health care in the ordinary course of business or in the practice of a profession.
5. It is helpful to designate successor health care proxy (s), to take over if your first choice is unable to serve. There is space on the form for you to designate two successor health care proxies.
6. It is your responsibility to notify your doctor about this document.
7. Your health care proxy's authority takes effect only when you no longer have the capacity to make and communicate your own health care decisions.
8. The document will remain in effect until you revoke (cancel) it. You may revoke this document (in whole or in part) or limit your health care proxy's authority at any time. Complete revocation may be accomplished by obliterating, burning, tearing, or otherwise destroying the document or by defacing it in a manner that clearly expresses your intent to revoke it. You may also write your revocation or limitation, sign and date it or have it signed and dated by someone acting at your direction. Finally, you may revoke the document or limit your proxy's authority verbally by expressing that intent in writing in the presence of a witness who is 19 years or older and who signs and dates a writing confirming your expression of intent. A verbal revocation or limitation becomes

effective only when your attending physician receives a copy of the witness' written statement. If you execute a new document designating a health care proxy, this document will be revoked unless the new document specifically states otherwise.

9. Unless otherwise provided, any authority granted to your spouse under this document is revoked if your marriage is dissolved or annulled or if you are legally separated or a party to divorce proceedings.
10. If you are diagnosed as pregnant by your attending physician, this document's authority shall be suspended and have no effect until the pregnancy is completed.
11. This document is in compliance with §26-1-2 of the Code of Ala. and §22-8A-4 of the *Natural Death Act* of the Code of Ala. (2015).
12. Alabama law requires using a specifically-worded form. In order to not contradict the "Will to Live" language, we recommend that you **NOT** initial *any* of the 4 questions under "when I become terminally ill or injured" (page 1) or "When I become permanently unconscious" (page2) – leaving all four questions blank. We also recommend that you select the **second** option on page 5, under "Instructions for Proxy."
13. You should periodically review your document to be sure it complies with your wishes. Before making any changes, be aware that it is possible that the statutes controlling this document have changed since this form was prepared. Contact the Will to Live Project or any attorney to determine if this form can still be used.
14. If you have any questions about this document or want assistance filling it out, please consult an attorney.

For additional copies of the Will to Live, please visit www.nrlc.org.

Form prepared 1998
Clerical Changes Made 2015
Reviewed 2015

State of Alabama

Health Care Proxy and Will to Live Form

ADVANCE DIRECTIVE FOR HEALTH CARE (Living Will and Health Care Proxy)

This form may be used in the State of Alabama to make your wishes known about what medical treatment or other care you would or would not want if you become too sick to speak for yourself. You are not required to have an advance directive. If you do have an advance directive, be sure that your doctor, family, and friends know you have one and know where it is located.

Section 1. Living Will

I, _____, being of sound mind and at least 19 years old, would like to make the following wishes known. I direct that my family, my doctors and health care workers, and all others follow the directions I am writing down.

I know that at any time I can change my mind about these directions by tearing up this form and writing a new one. I can also do away with these directions by tearing them up and by telling someone at least 19 years of age of my wishes and asking him or her to write them down.

I understand that these directions will only be used if I am not able to speak for myself.

IF I BECOME TERMINALLY ILL OR INJURED:

Terminally ill or injured is when my doctor and another doctor decide that I have a condition that cannot be cured and that I will likely die in the near future from this condition.

Life sustaining treatment — Life sustaining treatment includes drugs, machines, or medical procedures that would keep me alive but would not cure me. I know that even if I choose not to have life sustaining treatment, I will still get medicines and treatments that ease my pain and keep me comfortable.

Place your initials by either “yes” or “no”:

I want to have life sustaining treatment if I am terminally ill or injured.

_____ Yes _____ No

***SEE #12 OF THE ALABAMA “SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS” SECTION**

Artificially provided food and hydration (Food and water through a tube or an IV)—I understand that if I am terminally ill or injured I may need to be given food and water through a tube or an IV to keep me alive if I can no longer chew or swallow on my own or with someone helping me.

Place your initials by either “yes” or “no”:

I want to have food and water provided through a tube or an IV if I am terminally ill or injured.

Yes _____ No _____

***SEE #12 OF THE ALABAMA SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS SECTION**

IF I BECOME PERMANENTLY UNCONSCIOUS:

Permanent unconsciousness is when my doctor and another doctor agree that within a reasonable degree of medical certainty I can no longer think, feel anything, knowingly move, or be aware of being alive. They believe this condition will last indefinitely without hope for improvement and have watched me long enough to make that decision. I understand that at least one of these doctors must be qualified to make such a diagnosis.

Life sustaining treatment — Life sustaining treatment includes drugs, machines, or other medical procedures that would keep me alive but would not cure me. I know that even if I choose not to have life sustaining treatment, I will still get medicines and treatments that ease my pain and keep me comfortable.

Place your initials by either “yes” or “no”:

I want to have life-sustaining treatment if I am permanently unconscious.

Yes _____ No _____

***SEE #12 OF THE ALABAMA SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS SECTION**

Artificially provided food and hydration (Food and water through a tube or an IV) — I understand that if I become permanently unconscious, I may need to be given food and water through a tube or an IV to keep me alive if I can no longer chew or swallow on my own or with someone helping me.

Place your initials by either “yes” or “no”:

I want to have food and water provided through a tube or an IV if I am permanently unconscious.

Yes _____ No _____

***SEE #12 OF THE ALABAMA SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS SECTION**

OTHER DIRECTIONS:

Please list any other things you want done or not done.

In addition to the directions I have listed on this form, I also want the following:

GENERAL PRESUMPTION FOR LIFE

I direct my health care provider(s) and health care proxy(s) to make health care decisions consistent with my general desire for the use of medical treatment that would preserve my life, as well as for the use of medical treatment that can cure, improve, reduce or prevent deterioration in, any physical or mental condition.

Food and water are not medical treatment, but basic necessities. I direct my health care provider(s) and health care proxy to provide me with food and fluids, orally, intravenously, by tube, or by other means to the full extent necessary both to preserve my life and to assure me the optimal health possible.

I direct that medication to alleviate my pain be provided, as long as the medication is not used in order to cause my death.

I direct that the following be provided:

- the administration of medication;
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); and
- the performance of all other medical procedures, techniques, and technologies, including surgery,

–all to the full extent necessary to correct, reverse, or alleviate life-threatening or health impairing conditions or complications arising from those conditions.

I also direct that I be provided basic nursing care and procedures to provide comfort care.

I reject, however, any treatments that use an unborn or newborn child, or any tissue or organ of an unborn or newborn child, who has been subject to an induced abortion. This rejection does not apply to the use of tissues or organs obtained in the course of the removal of an ectopic pregnancy.

I also reject any treatments that use an organ or tissue of another person obtained in a manner that causes, contributes to, or hastens that person’s death.

I request and direct that medical treatment and care be provided to me to preserve my life without discrimination based on my age or physical or mental disability or the “quality” of my life. I reject any action or omission that is intended to cause or hasten my death.

I direct my health care provider(s) and health care proxy to follow the policy above, even if I am judged to be incompetent.

During the time I am incompetent, my proxy, as named below, is authorized to make medical decisions on my behalf, consistent with the above policy, after consultation with my health care provider(s), utilizing the most current diagnoses and/or prognosis of my medical condition, in the following situations with the written special instructions.

WHEN MY DEATH IS IMMINENT

A. If I have an incurable terminal illness or injury, and I will die imminently – meaning that a reasonably prudent physician, knowledgeable about the case and the treatment possibilities with respect to the medical conditions involved, would judge that I will live only a week or less even if lifesaving treatment or care is provided to me – the following may be withheld or withdrawn:

(Be as specific as possible; SEE SUGGESTIONS.):

(Cross off any remaining blank lines.)

WHEN I AM TERMINALLY ILL

B. Final Stage of Terminal Condition. If I have an incurable terminal illness or injury and even though death is not imminent I am in the final stage of that terminal condition – meaning that a reasonably prudent physician, knowledgeable about the case and the treatment possibilities with respect to the medical conditions involved, would judge that I will live only three months or less, even if lifesaving treatment or care is provided to me – the following may be withheld or withdrawn:

(Be as specific as possible; SEE SUGGESTIONS.):

(Cross off any remaining blank lines.)

C. OTHER SPECIAL CONDITIONS:

(Be as specific as possible; SEE SUGGESTIONS.):

(Cross off any remaining blank lines.)

If you do not have other directions, place your initials here:

_____ No, I do not have any other directions.

Section 2. If I need someone to speak for me.

This form can be used in the State of Alabama to name a person you would like to make medical or other decisions for you if you become too sick to speak for yourself. This person is called a health care proxy. You do not have to name a health care proxy. The directions in this form will be followed even if you do not name a health care proxy.

Place your initials by only one answer:

_____ I do not want to name a health care proxy. (If you check this answer, go to Section 3)

_____ I do want the person listed below to be my health care proxy. I have talked with this person about my wishes.

First choice for proxy: _____

Relationship to me: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____
Day-time phone number: _____
Night-time phone number: _____

If this person is not able, not willing, or not available to be my health care proxy, this is my next choice:

Second choice for proxy: _____
Relationship to me: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____
Day-time phone number: _____
Night-time phone number: _____

Instructions for Proxy

Place your initials by either “yes” or “no”:

I want my health care proxy to make decisions about whether to give me food and water through a tube or an IV. Yes _____ No _____

Place your initials by only one of the following:

(*SEE #12 OF THE ALABAMA SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS SECTION)

_____ I want my health care proxy to follow only the directions as listed on this form.

_____ I want my health care proxy to follow my directions as listed on this form and to make any decisions about things I have not covered in the form.

_____ I want my health care proxy to make the final decision, even though it could mean doing something different from what I have listed on this form.

Section 3. The things listed on this form are what I want. I understand the following:

If my doctor or hospital does not want to follow the directions I have listed, they must see that I get to a doctor or hospital who will follow my directions.

If I am pregnant, or if I become pregnant, the choices I have made on this form will not be followed until after the birth of the baby.

If the time comes for me to stop receiving life sustaining treatment or food and water through a tube or an IV, I direct that my doctor talk about the good and bad points of doing this, along with my wishes, with my health care proxy, if I have one, and with the following people:

Section 4. My signature

Your name: _____

The month, day, and year of your birth: _____

Your signature: _____

Date signed: _____

Section 5. Witnesses (need two witnesses to sign)

I am witnessing this form because I believe this person to be of sound mind. I did not sign the person's signature, and I am not the health care proxy. I am not related to the person by blood, adoption, or marriage and not entitled to any part of his or her estate. I am at least 19 years of age and am not directly responsible for paying for his or her medical care.

Name of first witness: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of second witness: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Section 6. Signature of Proxy

I, _____, am willing to serve as the health care proxy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Second Choice for Proxy:

I, _____, am willing to serve as the health care proxy if the first choice cannot serve.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Form Updated 2008
Clerical Changes 2015
Reviewed 2015