

Your Substitute Decision Maker(s)



Imagine - one day, without warning, you find yourself in a hospital, unable to communicate. Who would speak for you and make health care decisions for you? A Substitute Decision Maker is the person (or people) who will provide consent or refusal of consent for care and treatments for you if you are not mentally capable to do that for yourself. Advance Care Planning can include choosing a Substitute Decision Maker as well as expressing your wishes about care that you want or may not want. Research has shown that if you talk to your Substitute Decision Maker(s) about your wishes for future health care, it helps relieve the stress and anxiety they will feel if they are asked to make decisions on your behalf.

Think carefully about who you feel would honour and follow your wishes, and would be most capable of making medical decisions on your behalf. This may be a spouse, an adult child, trusted family member or a good friend. This person(s) will be your Substitute Decision Maker.

Legal requirements regarding the appointment of a Substitute Decision Maker vary across the country. Visit our Advance Care Planning website at: <http://www.advancecareplanning.ca/making-your-plan/how-to-make-your-plan/provincialresources.aspx> for more information about the guidelines in your province or territory.

If you have written or recorded your wishes for future care - share this document with your Substitute Decision Maker - that

will help him or her to make decisions if called upon to do so. Continue to have conversations - as your values and wishes may change.

You may have more than one Substitute Decision Maker - for example, two children. If that is the case it is important to have conversations all together - to try to lessen the possibility of conflict and ease stress.

It is important to realize that health conditions are complex and it is not possible to discuss or anticipate every situation. Therefore, continuing the conversation will guide your Substitute Decision Maker in making the best decision.

Remember - your Substitute Decision Maker will only be asked to make decisions if you are incapable of making them yourself. Health care providers are required to offer you, or your substitute decision maker if you are not capable, detailed explanations of any investigations/treatments and their risks, benefits and side effects; alternatives to these options; and what would likely happen if you refuse the options. Health care providers must also answer any questions you have about the treatments and the information must be provided before you give consent.