



Personal Directive (Living Will)

MakingHealthHappen.com

What is a personal directive?

A personal directive (also called a living will) provides instructions to others in the event you can't make or communicate decisions yourself. The law in Alberta does not allow for another person to automatically make decisions on someone else's behalf.



Why is it significant?

Anyone can wind up at the centre of a personal or medical dilemma, so it's a good idea to make your wishes known in advance. Doing so also protects your family from legal complications and the emotional hardship of having to make decisions for you. The instructions that can be given in a personal directive may include what medical treatments you want or don't want, where you'd like to live, and who you would like to live with if your circumstances were to change.

What else should I be aware of?

Unlike a will, a personal directive only covers non-financial matters. If you haven't done so already, consider writing an enduring power of attorney (for financial matters), as well as a will (for personal assets after death).



What can I do?

- ✓ Consider all the possible scenarios in which you would like your wishes to be known, including life support and organ donation.



- ✓ Talk through all the scenarios with your family. Let them know what instructions you're planning on giving.
- ✓ Decide who to name as your substitute decision-maker (agent). Make sure they understand and are willing to accept this responsibility.

- ✓ Research personal directives online and/or at the library. Try to find samples of an actual personal directive.
- ✓ Be as clear and detailed as you can be in writing down your instructions.
- ✓ Ensure both you and a witness sign and date the document. Though it's not legally necessary, you may want to consult a lawyer before finalizing it.

- ✓ Tell your family, lawyer and doctor about your personal directive and provide copies.
- ✓ Learn more about personal directives by contacting Alberta Seniors and Community Supports at www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/services_resources/opg/persdir and by going to www.makinghealthhappen.com.



Go to MakingHealthHappen.com and enter **aa114595** in the search box to learn more about Personal Directives.