

Advance Directives

How can a person plan for a time when he or she may not be able to make health care decisions for him or herself?

In New Mexico, you are legally entitled to state your preferences for treatment in advance, in case a time comes when you are no longer able to make those decisions for yourself. You also have a right to choose a person to make those decisions for you. If you do not appoint someone, the law provides that an appropriate relative or friend in a special relationship with you can make health care decisions on your behalf. Although it is not always comfortable, having candid conversations in advance with loved ones about preferences for life-prolonging measures (such as artificial nutrition or life support) makes it easier in the long run to honor a person's wishes. Although you are not required to use a special form to record your wishes or appoint a decision-maker, you may find it helpful to use an advance directive form, which you can request from your provider or download, along with additional information, at:

<http://hscethics.unm.edu/directives/index.html>
or request by calling or writing the Institute for Ethics at (505) 272-4566
E-mail: HSC-Ethics@salud.unm.edu

Informed Decision Making

What information do I need to make an informed health care decision for myself or someone else?

To make good decisions, you need to be sure that you have the relevant information. Some questions that you may want to ask a health care provider include:

- What is the name for the condition?
- What is expected to happen with this condition and how long will it last?
- What are the treatments for the condition?
- What treatment do you recommend in this case and why?
- What are the side-effects of the treatment?
- How else might the treatment affect a person's life?
- Are there other available treatments?
- What are the side effects of those other treatments?
- What do you think will happen if the condition is not treated?
- What can I do to promote my continued health and well-being?



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This brochure was developed through the generous support of Jack and Donna Rust

Ethics Consultation Service

Biomedical Ethics Committee



To request a consultation call:

505-688-9137

or

505-380-3614

(dedicated pager)



How does the Ethics Consultation Service work?

When a request for a consultation is received, the Ethics Consultation Service will arrange a meeting with the patient, the family and loved ones, and the providers who are caring for the patient. Ethics consultants will be present to help encourage everyone involved to discuss the issues, concerns and decisions to be made. The patient, if unable to participate, will most often be represented by his or her decision-maker, who is responsible for telling others what the patient would likely want, if the patient were able to communicate. The Ethics Consultation Service does not make treatment decisions. Through the consultation process, the Ethics Consultation Service offers a safe and confidential environment for open discussion about the patient's welfare, so that patients, families, and providers can communicate, make decisions and work together more effectively in caring for this person.

Who are the providers of the Ethics Consultation Service?

The Ethics Consultation Service is provided by members of the Biomedical Ethics Committee at the Health Sciences Center. The members of this committee come from many walks of life: community members, doctors, nurses, social workers, lawyers, clergy and others with training and experience in ethical decision-making

Is there a cost for an ethics consultation?

No, there is no fee charged for an ethics consultation; it is a service provided by the Health Sciences Center.

Who can request an ethics consultation?

Anyone who is interested in the welfare of a patient may request an ethics consultation. Most often, all those with a role in caring for the patient will be invited to the consultation. If needed, consultations are available for separate discussions with patients and families or other small groups.

What does the Ethics Consultation Service offer?

Sometimes patients and those who care for them face difficult decisions. The Ethics Consultation Service is available to help patients, their loved ones, and their health care providers with these hard choices and other ethical concerns,

- Understanding what a patient would want, when that person cannot speak for himself or herself
- Identifying the legal decision-maker for a patient who cannot communicate
- Resolving disagreements that might arise among patients, families and providers
- Communicating about appropriate treatment options

Any ethical concern or question about health care decisions and values can be discussed in an ethics consultation.

How do I request an ethics consultation?

You may reach the Ethics Consultation Service by calling 505-688-9137 or 505-380-3614 (a dedicated pager). You may also ask the hospital operator to page a member of the Ethics Consultation Service.