



healthcurrent

Guide for Health Care Power of Attorney/Healthcare Agent

I have been appointed as an Arizona health care power of attorney; now what?

You have been appointed by _____ to be his/her health care power of attorney. Please take some time to review this guide to prepare yourself for this role.

What is a health care power of attorney (HPCOA)?

A legal Arizona document was completed that named you as the health care power of attorney. This will allow you to make future medical decisions for _____ if/when this individual becomes too ill to communicate or not able to make those decisions for her/himself.

What kind of decisions would I be called on to make?

- Give or refuse consent to medical, surgical, hospital and related care.
- Consent or refuse an autopsy (dependent on the directive in the document and Arizona law).
- Consent or refuse organ donation (dependent on the directive in the document).
- Burial and funeral arrangements (dependent on the directive in the document).
- Access to medical records.
- Choices about where care is to be provided.

Questions I may want to ask about my role?

- _____ and I talked about his/her wishes. Can I represent his/her decisions, even if I disagree with some of them?
- Do I feel comfortable about voicing his/her decisions during a stressful health crisis?
- Am I available consistently by phone to be able to communicate with their healthcare providers (an HCPOA does not have to be in-person to carry out the role)?
- Am I willing to take on this responsibility?

If you have concerns about any of your answers to the above, it is important to have an open conversation with the person who has chosen you. You can also ask to have a conversation together with a healthcare provider or an attorney.

Does this mean I am the executor of their estate or have financial responsibilities?

Being appointed as a health care power of attorney is separate from any estate or financial dealings on behalf of the person. You may have been appointed in a different document for those roles, but this document simply deals with healthcare-related decisions. You will not be responsible for medical care costs as the health care power of attorney.

What if something changes and I am not able to fulfill this role?

This document can be changed or revoked at any time. If something changes and you do not feel you can continue in this role, it is important to share that as soon as possible. These documents should be reviewed regularly, as healthcare wishes may also change with age, diagnosis or decline.

Additional factors to consider?

- It is okay to share that you are not comfortable with taking on this responsibility. It is better to say “no” upfront and give this person the opportunity to choose another representative. It may be that you simply need to further explore their healthcare decisions and wishes to become more comfortable with representing them when the time comes.
- If there are not written directions for healthcare in a living will document, you will want to talk with him/her about completing this. Being able to see preferences written out can give you, the HCPOA, more confidence in being able to voice them when needed. Additionally, seeing directives in writing allows you to ask additional questions to ensure you understand the desires. For example, “I don’t want any heroics” can mean different things to different people, so you will want to explore this further.

Do not wait to have these conversations. It is better to have them now then lose the opportunity when a health crisis or accident makes it impossible to ask questions.

For more information, visit AZNHDD.org.