

## Things to Know About a Personal Directive

### 1. What is a Personal Directive?

- It is a personal document or statement, not legally binding in Massachusetts, which gives your Health Care Agent information and instructions about what's important to you and the kind of care you want and don't want.
- It can be a personal letter or memo, or a document commonly known as a *Living Will*, *Advance Care Directive*, or *Medical Directive*

### 2. What is the difference between a Health Care Proxy and a Personal Directive?

- A **Health Care Proxy** is a legally binding document in which you appoint a person you trust, called a Health Care Agent, to make health care decisions on your behalf if you are not able to make or communicate decisions yourself
- A **Personal Directive** is NOT a legally binding document, but a personal document in which you give your Health Care Agent specific information and instructions about the kind of care you want, sharing your values, personal and religious preferences, and choices for care
- These documents work hand-in-hand. You appoint a Health Care Agent in a Health Care Proxy (legal document), with the power to make decisions on your behalf, and give your Agent essential information in a Personal Directive (personal document) about what's important to you and your wishes for the health care you want and don't want.

### 3. Who can create a Personal Directive?

Every competent adult has the choice to create a Personal Directive. An adult must be:

- 18 years old and older, of sound mind and under no constraint or undue influence

### 4. How does a Personal Directive work?

- As a competent adult, you have the right to make your own health care decisions
- If you become unable to make decisions yourself, your Health Care Agent steps in to make health care decisions on your behalf using your Personal Directive as a basis to make decisions
- After talking with your health care providers to understand your current condition, the prognosis, and possible treatments and side effects of each medical alternative, your Agent will make health care decisions in accordance with his/her understanding of your wishes, religious & moral beliefs.
- If there are areas where your wishes are not known, your Agent will make health care decisions in accordance with his or her assessment of your best interest
- You can revise and update your Personal Directive over time

### 5. Can I change my mind or cancel or revoke a Personal Directive?

- You can revise, cancel or revoke a Personal Directive anytime as long as you are competent

### 6. How do I complete a Personal Directive?

It's simple. You can do it yourself without the help of an attorney:

- Print and fill out the Honoring Choices Personal Directive Form and Instructions