

The Importance of Advance Directives for Mental Health Care

A Guide for Customers

FROM: Consumer/Peer staff of the Michigan Department of Community Health: March 2007

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What is an Advance Directive for Mental Health Care?

- A document in which you appoint another individual to make mental health-care decisions for you in the future – if and when you should lose your ability to make decisions for yourself. This person then becomes your *Patient Advocate*.

Advance Directives are described in law in Michigan.

Advance Directives (AD) are a personal choice.
Everything you put in your AD is a personal choice.

ADVANTAGES:

- (1) Control over your decision-making ability - even during a symptom relapse/emergency.
- (2) Shorter crisis period:
 - Getting the services that meet your own desires and needs.
 - Tailoring services specific to your unique situation. Reflects what has worked in the past.
 - Better mental health treatment
 - Caregivers are involved and follow your AD instructions.
- (3) Faster healing and faster recovery because:
 - The needed supports from caregivers and the system are already in place.
 - Protect individuals from ineffective, unwanted treatment.
 - Effective medications are already established.
 - Avoid probate court and involuntary commitment:
 - To do so, write in your AD the procedures on how you would like to utilize voluntary commitment.

GOALS OF AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE BEFORE AN EVENT:

- (1) Know the warning signs that indicate you are not doing OKAY.
- (2) Avoid a crisis by using your identified supports.
- (3) Know effective medications used in the past.
- (4) Lessen caregivers need to guess as to how you want your treatment to be carried out.

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POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS BEFORE A RELAPSE:

- * Off medications or adjusting to different medications
- * Loss – death of loved one; job; overall health
- * Increased Stress
- * Anniversary dates of trauma
- * Substance Abuse
- * Lack of sleep
- * Medical Problems
- * Holidays

INDIVIDUAL TREATMENT OPTIONS – “Know Yourself”

- * Medication names and dosages
- * Pharmacy
- * Preferences and dislikes
- * Past Successes and Failures
- * Diagnosis
- * Hospital of Choice
- * Doctors and phone numbers
- * See AD document for specific issues

GOALS OF ADVANCE DIRECTIVE DURING CRISIS:

- * Choice of Hospital
- * Finances taken care of
- * Notifying people
- * Caring for pets
- * Phone numbers
- * Personal items being brought to hospital
- * Collect Mail
- * Help with transportation
- * Help plan passes from hospital
- * Obtain effective medication
- * Address physical health issues too
- * Inform workplace

BARRIERS TO COMPLETING AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE:

- Overcome others lack of participation in completing your Advance Directive.
- Giving up control: What is the alternative?
- Fear of causing a crisis to happen.
- Finding a patient advocate.
- Finding witnesses.
- Fearing of legalities of the document.
- Fear that the AD will not be followed.
- Difficulty completing the form.
- Fear that it will be used against you in a negative way.
- Denial, stigma, internalized.

HOW TO PICK A PATIENT ADVOCATE:

- (1) Brainstorm all the people in your life.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Neighbors
 - Co-Worker
 - CMH people
- (2) Weigh the pros and cons of each person.
 - Geographic closeness
 - Are you close emotionally?
 - Knowledge of the system
 - Knowledge of your personal history
 - Level of trust you have with them
 - Additional pros and cons

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SOME BENEFITS TO HAVING A PATIENT ADVOCATE:

- ✓ Patient advocate may know when something is wrong and can assist.
- ✓ Patient advocate follows your wishes and desires.
- ✓ Advocates for your needs.
- ✓ Receiving additional supports during your relapse.
- ✓ Gets your medication correct.
- ✓ Drives you to the hospital.
- ✓ What other things can a patient advocate do for you?

WHO CAN BE YOUR WITNESSES to your completed Advance Directive?

- ◆ Friends and Neighbors
- ◆ NOT your doctor or patient advocate
- ◆ NOT your immediate family
- ◆ NOT an employee of your CMH or the hospital

You can use your WRAP and crisis plan(s) as a guide to completing your Advance Directive.

DISSEMINATION OPITIONS – Who should you give copies of your AD to?

- ✓ Primary Mental Health Professional
- ✓ Psychiatrist
- ✓ Advocate
- ✓ Family Doctor
- ✓ Therapist
- ✓ Family
- ✓ Significant Other
- ✓ Friends
- ✓ Drop-in workers
- ✓ Club-House friends and staff
- ✓ Co-workers

ARE YOU READY TO COMPLETE AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE? – Things to consider

- (1) Take control and responsibility for your illness. “You control it rather than it controlling you”.
- (2) Know your illness and symptoms.
- (3) Do the AD in steps and stages.
- (4) Understand the legal aspects.
- (5) Brainstorm people to be involved in completing your AD.
- (6) Know your health care providers.
- (7) Self-inventory of your warning signs of not doing well.
- (8) What stage of recovery are you in?



If you have any questions about establishing an Advance Directives, please contact the Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK) Customer Services office at 269-553-7000 or 1-877-553-7160.