



*In Collaboration with the Department of Children and Families  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program Office of Circuit 17*



# Mental Health Advance Directives

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## How to Be an Effective Healthcare Surrogate

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## How to be an Effective Healthcare Surrogate

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### Be Knowledgeable

#### **Know your role**

To represent the wishes regarding physical and/or mental health care of the person on whose behalf you are acting.

To consent to or refuse treatment based on those wishes, not yours.

You are not a “figurehead”, signing off on the provider’s decisions!

#### **Understand your authority and responsibility**

Read the Advance Directive of the person you are representing.

Discuss treatment options and scenarios with that person to familiarize yourself with the person’s general and specific wishes.

### Don’t Be Afraid to Ask Questions

You have the *right* to access information from the health care provider about the person you are representing.

Get as much information as possible so that you can make fully informed decisions.

### Ask For Full Explanations

If there is anything that you don’t understand, ask staff to explain them in terms that you can understand.

If you feel uncomfortable... like you don’t have “the whole picture”, say so!

Don’t be pushed into a decision before you feel you have the whole picture...

just as you wouldn’t make a decision for yourself before you felt you had all the information you needed to do so.

### Be Firm and Persistent

Don’t be bullied.

Don’t trust phrases like, “Trust me...”

Don’t hesitate to insist that you be fully heard.

Don’t be afraid to argue for what the person is entitled to!

### Keep Your Cool

Getting upset and/or yelling only serves to alienate providers, undermine your authority and credibility and, ultimately, decreases your effectiveness as an advocate.

### **Keep Things Written Down**

Get any 'promises' in writing!

Get copies of any signed consents to treatment.

Keep a log of your conversations with providers: date, time, name, position, phone, address, content, decisions... and go back and record the outcome.

*This may seem tedious and like "overkill", but if there is ever a question regarding your decisions, promises for arrangement of services, authorization of services, etc., it is better not to rely on memory!*