



Beginning January 3, 2005, a new law went into effect called Psychiatric Advance Directives. Advance Directives allow everyone to have the right to make decisions about his or her own health, including the right to choose and/or decline medical and psychiatric treatment. This right cannot be lost later when a person is unable to make a decision for themselves.

To be sure your rights are not lost you can write an “advance directive” that names another person to direct your treatment when there is a time you cannot direct the treatment and decisions yourself. The advance directive is a way to protect your rights.

Here are a few key points to help you understand what an advance directive is:

1. An Advance Directive is a legal document in which a person can state his or her preference regarding mental health care before a mental health crisis happens.
2. You can name a Health Care Surrogate or Advocate to make mental health care decisions for you some time in the future if you are not able to make your own decisions.
3. You can also name an Alternative Surrogate or Advocate to take over these duties if your first Surrogate is unable or unwilling to perform their responsibilities as listed in your advance directive.
4. An advance directive can be canceled by you at any time.
5. An advance directive does not require a specific form or an attorney to fill one out with you.
6. It is a great way to be an advocate for yourself.
7. You can plan now for a future time when you may be unable to advocate for yourself or make decisions about mental health care. In other words, your choices are made in the present, but acted on in the future.
8. The right to make health care decisions must be returned to a person as soon as their ability to make such decisions has returned.
9. You can choose a person you trust to speak for you. Mental health workers and professionals must listen to this choice.

Everyone is encouraged to learn more about advance directives and making decisions about treatment and mental health care. Detailed information and downloadable psychiatric advance directive forms are available on the Michigan Department of Community Health web site. A direct link to the MDCH page is provided on our web site at www.nwcmha.org.

To learn more about your behavioral health services see www.nwcmha.org

To reach your local Customer Services staff in Crawford, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Missaukee, Roscommon and Wexford Counties, call Northern Lakes CMH at (231) 922-4850 or (800) 337-8598.

To reach your local Customer Services staff in Lake, Mason and Oceana Counties, call West Michigan CMH System at (231) 843-5486.

To reach Customer Services staff at the Northwest CMH Affiliation, call (800) 337-8598.