

## Advance directives or physician orders for life-sustaining treatment

**Summary:** We respect the right of the member to control decisions relating to his or her own medical and mental health care. This includes the decision to have the medical or surgical means or procedures calculated to prolong life provided withheld or withdrawn, or your decisions about your mental health treatment that you prefer when you become impaired by mental illness that affect your judgement and communication about your mental health care . This right is subject to certain interests of society such as the protection of human life and the preservation of ethical standards in the medical profession.

### Advance Directives versus Mental Health Advance Directives

An advance directive (living will) protects your right to refuse medical treatment you do not want or to request treatment you do want in the event you lose the ability to make decisions yourself.

A mental health advance directive is a written document that describes **your** directions and preferences for treatment and care during times when you are having difficulty communicating and making decisions. It can inform others about what treatment **you** want and don't want, and it can identify a person called an "agent" who you trust to make decisions and act on your behalf. <sup>1</sup>

We adhere to the *Patient Self-determination Act* and maintain written policies and procedures regarding advance directives. Advance directives or physician orders for life-sustaining treatment (POLST) are documents signed by a competent person giving direction to medical and mental health care providers about treatment choices in certain circumstances. Amerigroup Washington, Inc. recognizes and supports the following advance directives:

- Durable power of attorney
- Living will

A durable power of attorney lets a member name a patient advocate to act on his or her behalf. A living will lets a member state his or her wishes on medical and mental health treatment in writing.

We encourage members age 18 and older to ask you for an advance directive, mental health advance directive, or POLST form and education at their first appointment. Please document their forms in your medical records. We understand a facility, physician or mental health provider may conscientiously object to an advance directive. However, we also recognize the member's right to determine his or her own care.

Please note that an Amerigroup associate cannot act as a witness to an advance directive nor serve as a member's advocate or representative. A sample living will/durable power of attorney is located on our provider website at <https://providers.amerigroup.com/WA>. For mental health advance directives go to: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/division-behavioral-health-and-recovery/mental-health-advance-directives>. A POLST form is located at Washington State Medical Association website at: <https://wsma.org/POLST>.

---

<sup>1</sup> DSHS Washington. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/BHSIA/dbh/documents/adenglish22-641.pdf>  
The information in this update may be an update or change to your provider manual. Find the most current manual at: