



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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September 23, 2024

Re: Join the Health Care Proxy Campaign

Dear Colleagues,

In an effort to identify ways to address capacity constraints in hospitals, we are advocating for anyone over the age of 18 to have a designated Health Care Agent and completed Health Care Proxy document in place - and we need your help.

As you know, the Health Care Proxy document is the first step in the guardianship process. Without this, there may be a delay in moving patients to the appropriate level of care. Not having a designated decision maker or documents in place may also lead to delays in providing care according to the wishes of an individual. This is not only an issue for our aging population; in an emergency situation, it is important to have someone who can understand and advocate for a patient's wishes.

DPH is partnering with Honoring Choices Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association to offer documents that can be completed by anyone. We ask that you join us in providing this information to all of your residents, patients, and students over the age of 18. For hospitals, please offer this to every patient at some point during their admission. Primary care practices are also the ideal place to initiate these conversations. Don't just ask the question and check the box — follow-up is key. Please note that under Massachusetts law you can offer and recommend this, but you cannot require its completion.

One of our pilot hospitals, Sturdy Memorial Hospital, has partnered with Honoring Choices Massachusetts on branding and building their own related program and website: sturdyhealth.org/patients-visitors/advance-directives. They have also actively engaged their primary caregivers in this effort.

To support your communications with patients, we have attached **Who is Your Health Care Agent**, a one-page handout to help adults choose a Health Care Agent and complete a Health Care Proxy. The handout is available in multiple languages at the website linked below. Please distribute it widely at flu clinics and community events and include in your admission or welcome packets. If you'd like to add the handout and free downloadable documents to your website or co-brand the Honoring Choices Health Care Proxy document, contact Ellen DiPaola, President & CEO, at edipaola@honoringchoicesmass.com.

The handout links to the Honoring Choices Massachusetts [Quick Start](#) page, where adults can:

- Download a free Health Care Proxy, available in 15 languages
- Download the one-page handout in multiple languages
- Make their own “I Have a Health Care Proxy” wallet card
- Watch helpful videos:
 - “Who is Your Health Care Agent? Choosing a trusted person”
 - “How to Complete an Honoring Choices Health Care Proxy”
- Download a free Personal Directive (Living Will), available in multiple languages

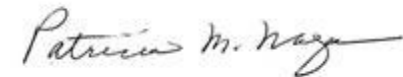
If you need further support in integrating these into your communication with patients, the [Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association](#), Honoring Choices Massachusetts, and other leading cross-continuum organizations have launched the [Simple Step Campaign](#). It's easy to add this campaign to your health care and community organization workflows. When you join, you receive no-cost Simple Step campaign materials, multilingual planning documents, and a 30-minute staff training to confidently engage adults in these simple — and vital — conversations. [Join the campaign today at honoringchoicesmass.com/partner-with-us](#).

Thank you for your partnership in these efforts.

Sincerely,



Robbie Goldstein, MD, PhD
Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health



Patricia M. Noga, PhD, RN, FAAN
Vice President, Clinical Affairs
Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association