

Why Should I Fill Out A Psychiatric Advance Directive?

(or, sometimes the best defense is a good offense)

An advance directive spells out what you want done in a time of crisis as a result of your mental illness. It enables you to choose who you want to make mental health treatment decisions for you. It can also let others know your plans for the care of your children, pets, or home. This directive does not "activate" unless your capacity to make mental health treatment decisions becomes impaired. You can also use this document to describe those behaviors which are "indicators" of impaired capacity which you think might activate the advance directive. An advance directive helps you maintain control in a time of mental health crisis and may prevent the crisis from worsening. Here are a number of important reasons why consumers should consider completing advance directives for mental health care:

1. An advance directive helps you maintain choice and control in the treatment you receive, according to your knowledge of what works best for you in managing your mental health care. This includes medication and treatment you do and do not want.
2. An advance directive increases the possibility that there will be continuity of care in times of crisis, including place, type, and personnel involved in treatment.
3. An advance directive may decrease the possibility of involuntary treatment.
4. If involuntary treatment does occur, a mental health care directive should have a direct impact on the treatment you do receive, including time in the hospital, the use of medications, place of treatment and treatment plan upon release.
5. Preparing a mental health care directive creates an excellent opportunity to develop an effective crisis intervention plan and to discuss it with family, friends, treatment professionals and others before a crisis arises. This includes the opportunity to discuss approaches that are effective and those that hinder rather than help in times of crisis.
6. An advance directive allows you to authorize the release of information at a time when your capacity to make authorization is clear. It also enables you to state whom you do and do not want notified at the time of hospitalization.
7. An advance directive, particularly the appointment of an agent who you trust, can be an effective alternative to the court-appointed guardian.
8. An advance directive can include how you want your family, pets, and finances cared for while you are receiving treatment.
9. The implementation of an advance directive can help restore self-confidence and allay fears and panic in a time of crisis. This helps in terms of stabilization and recovery.
10. New Mexico does not require you to fill out a specific form. However, it does require three things. A. You must sign the advance directive. B. You must have it witnessed and if you wish, have it notarized. C. If you appoint an agent, have the agent sign that he or she is accepting the appointment. That may be done on a separate piece of paper, but it may be helpful to have the signed acceptance as part of your advance directive.

What Does the Law Require an Advance Directive to Have?

New Mexico law does not require that anyone fill out a specific form. However, it does require three things.

- A. You must sign the psychiatric advance directive (PAD).
- B. You must have it witnessed and if you wish, have it notarized.
- C. If you appoint an agent, the agent must sign that he or she is accepting the appointment. That may be done on a separate piece of paper, but may be helpful to have the signed acceptance as part of your psychiatric advance directive (PAD).