



Protecting Your Visitation & Decision-Making Rights

In times of emergency, you may be unable to make medical decisions or state who you want to visit you. In these situations, hospitals may restrict visitation rights to a narrow interpretation of family that excludes those not legally or biologically related to the patient. Similarly, state laws around medical decision-making often limit these rights to a patient's biological family members when no documentation is designating a surrogate decision maker.

It is especially important for the LGBT community to take steps to ensure that the people we choose may visit us and make medical decisions on our behalf in times of emergency.

1. Complete advance healthcare directives and visitation authorization forms.

- **Advance healthcare directives** are legal documents that allow you to designate someone else to make medical decisions on your behalf in the event that you are incapacitated ([health care proxy](#)) and to make clear your preferences for life-saving procedures ([living will](#)).

- Download [Tools for Protecting Your Health Care Wishes](#) from Lambda Legal [PDF]

This document from Lambda Legal defines terms related to decision making in healthcare settings and answers FAQs for LGBT community members looking to protect their rights.

- Download [Legal Planning for Same-Sex Couples: Preparing for the Unexpected](#) from GLAD [PDF]

In this document, Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders answers FAQs related to the steps necessary for securing your decision-making rights. This document also includes a glossary of terms.

- [Download Life Lines from NCLR](#) [PDF]

This packet from the National Center for Lesbian Rights contains information about documents that will help you protect yourself and your loved ones in the event of illness, disability, or death – including advance healthcare directives.

- [Learn More from National Healthcare Decisions Day](#)

April 16th is National Healthcare Decisions Day and this site includes answers to frequently asked questions on advance healthcare directives and state-specific resources.

- [Download Your State's Forms](#)

This resource from Caring Connections, a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), directs you to your state's advance directives forms.

- **Hospital visitation authorization forms** instruct your doctor, care providers and hospital staff about who is allowed and given priority to visit you if you are hospitalized.

- [Download Sample Hospital Visitation Authorization Form](#)

- [Review Your State's Visitation Laws](#)

2. Talk with your primary care physician about your preferred visitors and advance healthcare directives.

3. Work with your local hospitals to get these completed forms on file.

4. Carry information related to your advance healthcare directives and visitation authorization forms in your wallet or other readily accessible area for emergencies.

- [Store Your Documents with DocuBank Healthcare Directives Registry](#)

You receive a customized wallet card that makes your documents instantly available 24 hours a 7, 365 days a year via automated fax or secure webpage. You also get stickers for your driver's license. A special discounted rate is available for HRC members and supporters.

- [Read "Put It In Writing" from AHA](#)

This brochure from the American Hospital Association provides basic facts about advance healthcare directives and encourages patients to explore their preferences for care at the end of life. It includes a template for a [Wallet ID Card](#) [PDF] that alerts healthcare workers of directives.

Original: <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/protecting-your-visitation-decision-making-rights>

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