

# POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE



Center for Disability  
& Elder Law

## Instructions

You made your **Power of Attorney for Health Care** document.  
Here's what to do next.

### STEP 1 - Review and Print

Review your choices. Make sure names, phone numbers, and addresses are correct. Print your forms. Do not sign yet.

### STEP 2 - Sign with Witnesses and a Notary

Sign and date the last page in front of your witnesses and, if possible, a notary. Write the date next to your signature. Your witnesses and notary must see you sign it, and they must also sign it right after you do. Illinois only requires you to have one witness. However, having two witnesses and getting your document notarized can help ensure your Power of Attorney is followed everywhere.

### STEP 3 - Make Copies

Give one copy to your agent and keep one for yourself. Keep the original in a safe place. Make sure your agent knows where the original is.

**Note:** Your agent can use a digital copy of the Power of Attorney for Health Care on their phone or tablet. They can take clear pictures of each page once it has been signed and witnessed.

### STEP 4 - Share It

Give copies to anyone else who should know, like:

- Your primary care doctor
- In-home caretaker
- Assisted living care team
- Nearest hospital

\* If you change anything on the printed form, write your initials next to the change. Or, use this program again to make a new one and follow the same steps.

#### Who can be a witness?

Someone 18 or older, such as:

- A neighbor
- Someone from your community (like your church or senior center)
- A bank teller or other staff at the notary location (not the notary themselves)

#### Who cannot be a witness?

- Your doctor
- Your family member
- Your agent or successor (back up) agent
- Your agent or successor agent's family member
- Anyone who helped make this document

#### Where can I find a notary?

- Search online for notaries in your zip code.  
Common places:
  - Banks
  - UPS stores
  - Libraries

#### **Learn more about your**

#### **Power of Attorney for Health Care at:**

<https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/legal-information/power-attorney-health-care-common-questions>

# POWER OF PLANNING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



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## Power of Attorney for Health Care (POA-HC)

- Lets you name someone you trust to make medical decisions if you can't.
- Can be used in hospitals, doctor's offices, nursing homes, or during emergencies.
- Your agent can accept or refuse treatments, choose providers, and speak with your care team.

## Other Important Planning Tools

These can also help you make your wishes clear:

- **Living Will Declaration:** States you don't want life-support if recovery is unlikely.
- **POLST:** A medical order with your doctor about life-sustaining treatment.
- **"This Is Me" Guide:** A personal guide about what matters to you.
- **Mental Health Declaration:** Lists your treatment preferences in a mental health crisis.
- **TODI (Transfer on Death Instrument):** Lets you name who inherits your home or car directly.
- **Last Will & Testament:** Distributes belongings and property after death.
- **POD (Payable on Death):** Names who inherits money in bank accounts.

## Power of Attorney for Property (and Finances (POA-P)

- Lets you name someone to help with money, bills, housing, and benefits.
- Can be used at banks, government offices, with landlords, or when signing financial documents.
- Your agent must keep records and act in your best interest.

## Starting the Conversation

It's not always easy to talk about planning ahead. Here are some gentle ways to begin:

- **Ask a question:** "Have you heard about Powers of Attorney? Have you ever thought about who would help you if you couldn't make your own decisions?"
- **Connect to their life:** "You've worked so hard. This is about protecting your wishes and your things."
- **Share your own story:** "I just made mine. It gave me peace of mind. Want to see how it works?"
- **Be patient:** One conversation may not be enough. Give time and space to think.

**Remember:** Planning ahead protects your choices, eases stress for loved ones, and helps avoid costly court processes.