



Your Life | Your Decisions | Our Support

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Alliance for Living and Dying Well?

The Alliance for Living and Dying Well is a collaborative effort by a group of Santa Barbara County organizations involved in end-of-life care and issues. These medical, non-profit and faith organizations are working together in the South County area to educate and encourage people to have early conversations about dying and the things that are important to them for end-of-life care. The member organizations of The Alliance for Living and Dying Well have seen a lot of human suffering that was caused by putting off these critical conversations with loved ones, as family members are faced with painful decisions that have to be made without information. The Alliance for Living and Dying Well wants to support and facilitate these conversations and help people document their wishes in writing in the form of an **Advance Care Directive**. The Alliance believes that, while painful, these types of conversations, along with planning for death and dying, can also be a time of deep meaning and growth. They can improve one's quality of life and ability to enjoy the time they have..

2. Why was the Alliance for Living and Dying Well formed?

The Alliance for Living and Dying Well was formed with three main purposes in mind:

- to develop and provide opportunities to foster conversations about living and dying that are supportive and feel safe — that encourage people speak openly about the reality of death, and accept it and embrace it as inextricably connected to life;
- to cultivate a dialogue that reduces the sense of isolation felt in death and dying, and that will reduce the stress of loved ones when decisions must be made ... they will know what you want; and
- to enhance the quality and coordination of end-of-life care services in Santa Barbara County.

3. Who are the members of the Alliance for Living and Dying Well?

Currently the members of the Alliance Board represent: Archstone Foundation, Cottage Health System, Sansum Clinic, Hospice of Santa Barbara, James S. Bower Foundation, Sarah House, St. Francis Foundation, Visiting Nurses & Hospice Care and several local faith communities. The Alliance is also talking to other organizations in the County to work on specific initiatives. Some of these organizations include: the Cancer Center, neighborhood clinics, faith-based organizations, skilled nursing facilities, and private employers.

4. What communities does the Alliance for Living and Dying Well serve?

The Alliance currently serves the communities in South Santa Barbara County.

Frequently Asked Questions, cont'd

5. What does the Alliance for Living and Dying Well want to accomplish?

The Alliance wants to provide more opportunities in the Santa Barbara community for safe and supportive settings for individuals to explore their relationship to the unknown, including death.

The Alliance believes that conversations with loved ones about death and dying can alleviate some of the suffering that our members have seen countless times when difficult choices have to be made and wishes have not been discussed. We also want to increase the number of people who have had these conversations and put their wishes in writing in the form of an Advance Care Directives like the Five Wishes document.

6. What are some of the programs that the Alliance for Living and Dying Well is involved with?

The Alliance conducts and supports a variety of programs and events that help people connect with friends and loved ones in conversations about the balance between life and death, and how to express wishes about end-of-life care. We do this by:

- Providing multiple **free monthly workshops** throughout Santa Barbara to help people fill out and finalize their Five Wishes or other Advance Directive Forms;
- creating and leveraging family/friends events in conjunction with area faith-based organizations and retirement homes to help members and residents have conversations about their end of life wishes and advance care directives;
- implementing a local Circles of Trust® program, a national retreat program based on the work of Dr. Parker Palmer;
- creating opportunities for people to share their end-of-life stories through different channels. The Alliance for Living and Dying Well believes that by sharing these stories, people can reduce their sense of isolation. See our website at <http://www.allianceforlivinganddyingwell.org> for featured stories;
- Co-sponsoring a variety of conferences and community educational events related to our mission.

The [Calendar section of our website](#) lists the opportunities we are providing to the public.

7. Why is an Advance Care Directive Important?

Having an up-to-date Advanced Care Directive – a written document – is one of the best ways to ensure that your wishes will be honored.

“Where do I wish to die?”

“Who do I want to be with?”

“Under what circumstances do I wish to have life support, to be resuscitated?”

“Who do I want to express my wishes for me if I am not able?”

These are the questions the Alliance wants everyone to answer through conversations with loved ones. Everyone involved must understand what is important to you, particularly if you cannot speak for yourself. Having a current Advance Care Directive is not only for those near the end of their lives. It is recommended that anyone over the age of 18 have one. ACDs should also be regularly updated, as situations, beliefs and wishes change over time. Completing your Advanced Care Directive is also a gift to your loved ones. It will create comfort for them, as they will understand clearly what your wishes are if you cannot tell them at a critical time.

Frequently Asked Questions, cont'd

7. Why is an Advanced Care Directive Important? *(continued from page 2)*

Every day, in hospitals across the country, families are struggling over whether to begin or to continue life support treatment for a loved one. If it were documented and clear to all involved what the person desires, families would feel more comfortable with difficult decisions and perhaps be free to attend to their loved one and each other in more fulfilling ways.

8. Why should people in Santa Barbara County call or email the Alliance for Living and Dying Well?

Every adult over the age of 18 should take the step, think about their end-of-life wishes and have a conversation with those people closest to them. The Alliance for Living and Dying Well can help by:

- Providing more information about Advance Care Directives;
- Providing free guidance and ACD materials through our Five Wishes workshops in Santa Barbara;
- Providing opportunities for conversations through activities like family nights, where people can come together and talk about their wishes in a safe, nurturing way;

9. Should physicians be involved in helping a patient create an Advance Care Directive?

It is often very valuable to have a family physician involved in the creation of an ACD. The physician can help explain the types of situations and treatments that might pertain to your ACD. Physicians can only counsel their patients and encourage patients to create an ACD. Ultimately, as with all such decisions, it is up to the individual.

10. I've heard about the *Five Wishes* ... what is this?

The Alliance for Living and Dying Well recommends using the Five Wishes process, developed by Aging with Dignity(www.agingwithdignity.org), to lead conversations about end-of-life wishes. Your Advanced Care Directive comes out of the conversations guided by The Five Wishes process. Once you've completed the process, your loved ones and your doctors will know who you want to make health care decisions for you, the kind of medical treatment you want or don't want, how comfortable you want to be, how you want people to treat you and what you want your loved ones to know. The Five Wishes document and process is available in 23 languages and in Braille.

11. What is a Physicians Order for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST)?

Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) is a medical order form on bright pink paper that indicates what types of life-sustaining treatment a seriously ill patient wants or doesn't want if his or her condition worsens. As patients move from the outpatient setting to hospitals or nursing homes, POLST forms ensure continuity of care and adherence to the patient's wishes and reduce the possibility of medical errors. POLSTs also require a conversation between the patient and families and loved ones. The POLST form, signed by both the physician and the patient, becomes a tool to capture these discussions and make them part of the patient's medical record. The form moves with the patient, and California requires POLST be honored across all settings of care and provides immunity to providers who honor a POLST document in good faith.