

Respecting Choices®

PERSON-CENTERED CARE

Introducing and Scheduling Proactive Care Planning for COVID-19

What matters most to you matters to us

Note to User: This guide is for use by team member to invite and schedule the healthcare agents or dedicated decision makers of individuals at greatest risk for complications from COVID-19, to have a proactive conversation about their preferences for care.

1. The invitation (virtual or in person)

“It is important that the healthcare team understands what matters most to [name of individual] in the event that [name of individual] becomes seriously ill as a result of COVID-19. We are eager to make sure we understand what they would want.”

“As the healthcare agent/DDM for [name of individual] your role is to help the healthcare team:

- *Follow [name of individual’s] previous decisions.*
- *Make decisions in difficult moments (e.g., stressful times, differing opinions; crisis situations) that are in line with [name of individual’s] goals, values, and preferences.”*

2. Provide the context for having further conversation

“There’s no way to tell if a sudden illness, such as COVID-19, could leave [name of individual] seriously ill and you, as their healthcare agent/DDM, may need to make decisions about treatment options and where [name of individual] might receive care, such as staying at home, hospital, or care facility. By giving direction ahead of time, the doctors will know what matters most to [name of individual], and treatments that match [name of individual’s] goals and values.”

“Has [name of individual] completed a POLST form?”

- **If yes:** *“It is important to review this document with the care team now to understand what matters most in the event [name of individual] becomes seriously ill.”* Proceed to #3: Make recommendations to continue the conversation.
- **If no:** *“We are here to help you have a conversation with the care team, so they know your answers to questions such as:*
 - *What is most important for [name of individual] to live well? For example, if they were having a good day, what would happen on that day?*
 - *What personal, cultural, or spiritual beliefs does [name of individual] have, if any, that would impact their care?*
 - *What would [name of individual] want if they became very ill? For example, would they want their medical care to focus on living longer, maintaining current health, or comfort care?*
 - *Anything else you would want us to know about what is important to [name of individual] at this time?”*

3. Make recommendations to continue the conversation

“Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Let’s talk about next steps. Can I schedule a time for you to talk with a clinician and continue the conversation, to make sure the care team is sure to know and honor [name of individual’s] preferences for care?”

“What questions do you have? Thank you again for talking with me today.”

Note to User: Make an appointment (telephonic, telemedicine, video conference, or in-person, as appropriate) to talk with a clinician (e.g., Facilitator, nurse, social worker, chaplain, physician, advanced practitioner) to continue the conversation.

Communication Skills

- Explore meaning of words/phrases

“What does, ‘I feel like a burden’ mean to you?”

- Paraphrase/clarify

“You were frustrated being in the hospital; tell me more.”

- Ask, “Anything else?”

“You have said you are weak, tired, and frustrated. Anything else?”

- Listen for and summarize themes

“You have talked about how difficult it was making decisions when your father was seriously ill. This conversation can help better prepare your family.”

- Affirm/reaffirm purpose of conversation

“You say this conversation is hard for you. I hope to help you today, to make it easier to learn how to talk to each other.”

- Verbalize empathy

“I’m sorry to hear you lost your job. I see that this is very upsetting.”

(over)

Additional Communication Techniques

- Use the Ask-Teach-Ask technique

When providing information:

1. First, ASK... what the individual understands.
2. Then, TEACH...provide information to fill in gaps in understanding.
3. Last, ASK (i.e., Teach-Back)...assess understanding of information before moving on.

“These are new ideas for many people, so I want to make sure I was clear. Can you tell me what you now understand about _____?”

- Remain value-neutral

Avoid words, phrases, or nonverbal expressions that may communicate personal biases or values.

- Pay attention to nonverbal communication (facial expressions, body movements)

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