

PCA Education Forum  
April 2022 Quick Reference

**Planning for End of Life:  
Key Terms and the Role of the PCA**

Advance Care Planning or planning for the end-of life is about discussions with patients and their families about their values and wishes regarding their medical treatments. These discussions are focused on goals around health and quality living. Advance Care Planning can help with understanding patient values and treatment preferences. All patients should be asked by providers or nurses if they have a completed health care proxy (HCP) form. If they do not, the nurses can assist them. If PCAs are ever asked about HCPs or if patients have questions, they should always let the nurse know.

**Key Definitions**

**Advance Directive:** Written statement of patient wishes that can include a HCP form and a MOLST form.

**Health Care Proxy:** Signed form that designates a healthcare agent or person to make medical decisions for you if you cannot.

**MOLST:** Medical Order of Life Sustaining Treatment is a signed medical order by your physician and patient.

**Palliative Care:** Care given by a team of medical professionals who focus on relief of symptoms, pain, and stress of serious illness.

**Hospice Care:** Comfort care at end-of-life intended for those expected to live 6 months or less. It is considered a type of palliative care.

# The Norman Knight Nursing Center for Clinical & Professional Development

Advance Care Planning is important because it increases the quality of life and comfort of patients. It reduces anxiety, hospitalizations, treatments, and healthcare costs at end-of-life.

## TIPS & TOOLS

If patients share feelings about their hopes, wishes, or plan of care, the PCA should inform the nurse about the need to continue the conversation. Caregivers should be honest and open and listen with empathy. Communication with the team ensures that patients' voices are always heard.

Understanding what Advance Care Planning is may also help PCAs to talk to their own families to engage in these important conversations. Here are some helpful tools:

**Five wishes tool** <https://fivewishes.org>

**Prepare tool** <https://prepareforyourcare.org/>

## PCA ROLE

Provide Comfort      Listen with empathy  
Observe and report symptoms  
Collaborate with nursing colleagues  
Provide help with personal care  
Reposition for prevention of skin breakdown

