NEED TO KNOW: END OF LIFE PLANNING

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES
An advance directive is a legal document that lets your healthcare team know your preferences for the medical care you want in the future. An advance directive has the following:

• Durable Power of Attorney - a person you want to speak on your behalf regarding medical care in the event you're unable to speak for yourself. Ideally this person knows your values, is easily reachable and is comfortable speaking with healthcare providers. You can list a primary decision maker as well as back-ups.

• Outlining preferences for resuscitation - by default, doctors or medics will attempt to restart your heart using CPR, electric shocks, medication, and placement of a breathing tube for life support if your hearts and lungs stop. Often, people have preferences for which of these treatments they would or would not want. Outline this as well as how long you'd like to be on life support in your advance directive.

The State of Colorado provides free advance directive templates.

POWER OF ATTORNEY
A legal document giving one person the power to act for another person. The person can have broad legal authority or limited authority to make decisions about the person's property, finances or medical care. PoAs are generally used in the event of a person's illness, disability or in the absence of a person needing to sign financial documents.

TYPES OF POWER OF ATTORNEY

• Limited. Gives someone else the power to act in your stead for a very limited purpose. Usually ends at a time specified in the document.

• General. Gives the person all the powers and rights you have yourself. Ends upon your death or unless you rescind it before then.

• Durable. Can be general or limited in scope, but it remains in effect after you become incapacitated. Without a durable power of attorney, if you become incapacitated, no one can represent you unless a court appoints a guardian. Ends upon your death.

• Springing. Does not go into effect until you become incapacitated. Must determine what incapacity is clearly in the document.

EMERGENCY DOCUMENTS TO KEEP IN A SAFE PLACE
In case of an emergency, make sure a trusted friend or family member knows where these documents are.

• Copies of insurance papers

• Copies of IDs such as passports, drivers license, Social Security card, birth certificates

• Personal documents - marriage certificates and family history

• Copies of medical documents including allergies, prescriptions, immunizations and medical records

• Emergency contact information

• Power of Attorney documents