

## **Instructions for Completing the Georgia Advance Directive for Healthcare**

The *Georgia Advance Directive for Healthcare* is a document provided by the state of Georgia that allows you to make certain designations and offer instructions regarding your healthcare, particularly in the case that you are unable or unwilling to make decisions for yourself in the moment. The document is available online and can be downloaded [here](#).

As far as possible, all medical decisions should be made in accord with Catholic teaching, particularly as articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* **paragraphs 2276-2279** and part 5 of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services* published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, which may be amended from time to time. The following instructions are meant to provide additional guidance for Catholics to complete this document in a way that conforms with Catholic teaching.

PART ONE of the document allows you to designate another person to serve as your “health care agent” who will have the power to make certain health care decisions for you when you cannot (or do not want to) make health care decisions for yourself. You may also choose to have your health care agent make certain decisions for you after your death. It is advisable that you complete this part of the document after prudent discernment and after speaking to the person you intend to designate as your health care agent to ensure that they are willing and able to make decisions for you that are in accord with Catholic teaching.

PART TWO of the document allows you to state your treatment preferences if you have a terminal condition or if you are in a state of permanent unconsciousness. The choices and instructions indicated in this section are meant to guide your health care agent in making decisions should you not be able or willing to make decisions yourself and would also provide guidance to medical staff should they not be able to reach your health care agent. This part of the document requires careful consideration. First, it is virtually impossible to anticipate every circumstance in the abstract. Further, even if one did desire to articulate specific treatment preferences in advance, this document does not allow you to choose different treatment preferences for each of the listed conditions (terminal condition and state of permanent unconsciousness). Finally, the document is particularly problematic in that it lists options for treatment preferences that are contrary to Catholic teaching (for example, withholding medically assisted nutrition and hydration to a person in a “persistent vegetative state” without qualification). Consequently, we recommend that you not complete Sections (6), (7), or (9) on this part of the form and only complete Section (8) ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS with the following text: “My health care agent has been instructed on how to make decisions for me regarding Sections (6), (7), and (9) of this document.”

PART THREE of the document allows you to nominate a person to be your guardian in the event a court decides that a guardian should be appointed. As with the selection of your healthcare agent, we recommend that you complete this portion of the document after prudent discernment and after speaking to the person you intend to nominate as your guardian to ensure that they are willing and able to make decisions for you that are in accord with Catholic teaching.

Should you have any further questions or concerns regarding the application of Catholic teaching to the *Georgia Advance Directive for Healthcare*, please feel free to contact Joey Martineck, Director of Respect Life Ministry for the Archdiocese of Atlanta at [jmartineck@archatl.com](mailto:jmartineck@archatl.com).