

# What Is a Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD)?

Plan now so your treatment preferences are known later.

## What a PAD Does

A Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD) is a legal document that lets you:

- Document your preferences for future mental health care
- Say what treatments you do or don't want
- Name a trusted person (a health agent) to speak for you if you're in crisis and can't make decisions yourself

Your voice is written down ahead of time so it can be followed when you may not be able to express it.

## Why a PAD Matters

Mental health crises can make it hard to communicate what you want.

A PAD helps:

- ✓ Protect your autonomy
- ✓ Guide your care team, family, and support system
- ✓ Reduce unwanted treatments or interventions
- ✓ Clarify your goals and values ahead of time

This plan is written while you're well — before a crisis happens.

## Who Can Make a PAD

- Anyone who is currently competent and able to make decisions
- You don't have to be diagnosed with a specific condition
- PADs are allowed in most states, and similar directives can still be used even where specific laws aren't yet adopted



## What You Can Include

A PAD can cover things like:

- Which medications you prefer or want to avoid
- Preferences about hospitalization or outpatient care
- Who you appoint as your health agent
- How decisions should be made if you can't speak for yourself

You can include whatever matters most to you.

## How It Works

1. Write your preferences while you're stable
2. Talk with your support person and clinician
3. Store it where it can be accessed in a crisis
4. It only goes into effect if you are unable to make or communicate decisions

This isn't a replacement for current care — it's a way to safeguard your wishes.

## Where to Start

- Visit [nrc-pad.org](http://nrc-pad.org) for templates, instructions, and state-specific info
- Talk with a clinician or lawyer if you want help drafting one

**A PAD ensures your voice is heard even when you can't speak for yourself.**