

## › The 4Step iCare Plan is an individualized, simple, 4-step approach to help you make difficult medical decisions.

In **Step 1** you will discuss your diagnosis with your doctor or other health care provider to gain a better understanding of your medical problems. In **Step 2** you will discuss your prognosis to learn more about how it is likely to affect your future. In **Step 3** you will think carefully about your personal goals and wishes. In **Step 4** you and your healthcare provider will use this information to make the medical and personal choices that are best for you.

The goal is to make sure that you receive the care you need and no less, and the care you want and no more.



## Step 1: Understand Diagnosis

### Ask your doctor or health care provider:

- › What is my diagnosis? (What is my exact medical problem or condition?)
- › What other medical problems do I need to consider?
- › Do you have additional written material that I can read about my diagnosis?

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### WHEN TO HAVE THIS DISCUSSION

Conversations about advance care planning can be challenging, and the timing may never seem right. If you've been admitted to the hospital, received a diagnosis of a serious illness, or experienced a troubling change in your quality of life, it's a good time to have this conversation with your health care providers and your family caregivers. There is seldom a good reason to delay this discussion.





## Step 3: Identify Goals of Care

**Tell your doctor or health care provider:**

- What matters to you most at this time
- What hopes and goals are most important to you
- Whether it is important to you to remain in your home
- How much quality of life you are willing to sacrifice for the sake of living longer
- How important it is for you to remain comfortable and avoid unpleasant treatments
- At what point you want to forego aggressive treatment and focus just on remaining comfortable and achieving the best possible quality of life

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### **FOCUS ON YOUR LIFE, NOT YOUR DISEASE**

Now it's time to focus on what you want your life to be like moving forward. Whatever the medical problem, it is still your life we are talking about: where and how you want to live; things you want to accomplish; your expectations for quality and length of life; your values, beliefs, goals, and dreams.

### **PALLIATIVE CARE**

Palliative care focuses on getting people feeling better in the setting of a serious medical condition by treating symptoms such as pain and anxiety, while simultaneously working with the medical team to help coordinate curative care.

### **HOSPICE CARE**

Hospice care is offered to those people entering into the final months of life who have elected to only focus on comfort and no longer seek life-prolonging treatments.

## 4

### Step 4: **Align Treatment**

#### Ask your doctor or health care provider:

- What are the treatment options given my prognosis and personal goals of care?
- What are the benefits and risks associated with these options?
- Are there additional treatments I should consider and/or additional doctors I should consult that will help me achieve my goals?
- What treatments are no longer necessary?
- Would returning to the hospital be right for me?
- Would beginning or continuing the treatments of artificial nutrition (feeding tube) and hydration (IV fluids) align with my goals of care?
- What are my chances of surviving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)?
- Would attempting emergency lifesaving procedures like CPR help me achieve my goals of care?
- Which of my medications, if any, are no longer necessary?
- Is it appropriate for me to complete a NJ POLST\* form at this time?

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#### **THINGS TO CONSIDER**

The aim is to ensure that, going forward, all medical decisions are based on your goals and wishes as defined in your iCare Plan. Before making treatment choices here are the kinds of questions you will need to discuss with your family and your doctor or health care provider.

\* **POLST** stands for Practitioner Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatments. These are **medical orders** from a physician or advance practice nurse that address patient goals, scope of therapies, returning to the hospital, artificial nutrition, and resuscitation status.

The form is portable across all health care settings in New Jersey. **These orders are actionable and, by law, must be followed by the medical teams caring for the patient.**



Learn more and download a NJ POLST form at [goalsofcare.org](http://goalsofcare.org).