



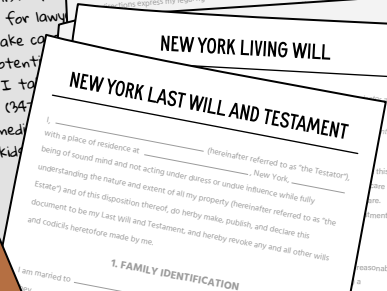
# PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE

A decision making tool for life planning

MENT OF AGENT TO CONTROL DISPOSITION OF REMAINS

### To-Do List

- 1. Figure out list of beneficiaries
- 2. Questions for lawyer
- 3. Who will take care of me
- 4. List of potential agents
- 5. When will I take action
- 6. All VOLS (34)
- 7. List of medical decisions
- 8. What to do with kids



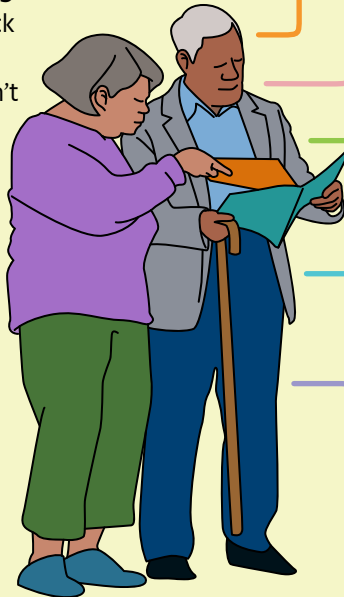
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# WHAT IS LIFE PLANNING?

Life planning is when you make plans for your future financial and healthcare needs. Your plans are saved as legal documents (or Advance Directives) that can be followed by your loved ones and doctors if you ever get too sick to speak for yourself.

When you make life planning documents, **you get to say how you want things like your healthcare and belongings to be handled.** You can also pick people you trust to carry out your wishes if you can't do them on your own anymore. Having these documents is a way to make sure that your needs will be met as they change over time.

There are many different life planning documents. This guide will explain five of them.



# START HERE TO SEE WHICH DOCUMENTS ARE RIGHT FOR YOU:

**I want to plan ahead for paying bills and keeping my government benefits.**

→ Power of Attorney (p. 3)

**I have people I trust to make important decisions about my medical care.**

→ Health Care Proxy (p. 5)

**I want to let doctors know what kind of medical care I want.**

→ Living Will (p. 7)

**I want to plan where my money and things will go after I pass away.**

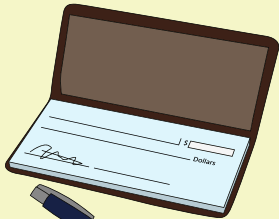
→ Last Will and Testament (p. 8)

**I want to plan what will happen to my body after I pass away.**

→ Control of Remains (p. 9)

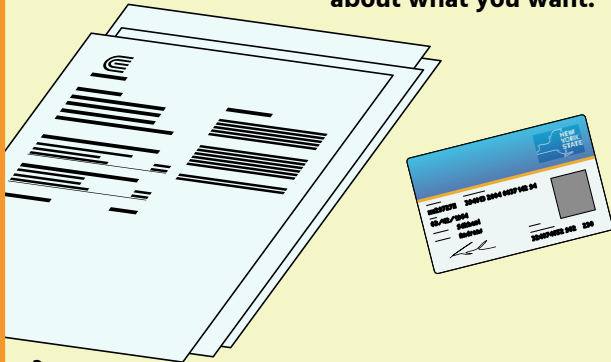
## ◆ POWER OF ATTORNEY

A **Power of Attorney** lists people who can make decisions about your money and property. These people can help pay your bills and keep benefits like food stamps. They can also make trips to the bank or a landlord's office for you if it's too hard to leave your home.



Giving someone decision making power over your money and property can be helpful, but it can also feel scary.

**Only pick people you trust, and talk to them about what you want.**



### KEEP IN MIND

- ◆ You can choose anyone 18+ to have Power of Attorney. This could be a family member, partner, friend, or neighbor.
- ◆ The people you choose can make decisions for you **as soon as the document is signed**.
- ◆ They can't make decisions about your money or property after you pass away. For help with this, look at Last Will and Testament (p. 8).

### IF YOU DON'T

- ◆ You could lose your benefits and home if you become too sick to manage them yourself.
- ◆ Falling behind on payments could make the court choose someone to make these decisions for you. They could pick someone you don't trust.

## HEALTH CARE PROXY

A **Health Care Proxy** makes sure that if you ever get too sick to speak for yourself, people you trust will tell doctors what kind of care you would like to receive. This document lists who those people are.

Some people worry that making a Health Care Proxy will take away their decision making power. **Doctors will always ask you first about health decisions, as long as you can communicate them.**



### KEEP IN MIND

- You can choose anyone to be listed as your Health Care Proxy. This could be a family member, partner, friend, or neighbor. **Talk to this person about your wishes and make sure they're comfortable with being your proxy.**
- Your proxy will be able to make **medical** decisions for you, but you can guide their choices by making a Living Will (p. 7).

### IF YOU DON'T

- A law decides who will make health decisions for you if you can't communicate them—this could be someone you don't trust or know well.
- Your partner might not be able to make health decisions for you, unless you're legally married.

## ★ LIVING WILL

A **Living Will** is a list that says what kind of medical treatments you don't want. Doctors use this document to confirm if you consent to medical treatments, like life support, or other medications. They will always ask you about these decisions first, as long as you can communicate them.

### KEEP IN MIND

- ★ If you don't feel comfortable listing a Health Care Proxy, a Living Will is another way to let doctors know what kind of treatment you don't want.
- ★ If you do have a Health Care Proxy, doctors will ask them first about your wishes. Your Health Care Proxy should use your Living Will to guide their decisions.

### IF YOU DON'T

- ★ There are laws that require doctors to do any treatment they can to keep you alive if your wishes aren't clear.



## ● LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

A **Last Will and Testament** says who gets your money and property after you pass away. Anyone can make one—it doesn't matter how much money you have, or how many things you own.

### KEEP IN MIND

- In your will, you'll list an Executor, who will make sure your things are going where you want them to. You can choose anyone 18+ to be your Executor, like a family member, partner, friend, or neighbor.



### IF YOU DON'T

- The court will choose a family member to split up your money and things. This person might not be someone you know well or trust. They might not split things up the way you want.



## ▲ CONTROL OF REMAINS FORM

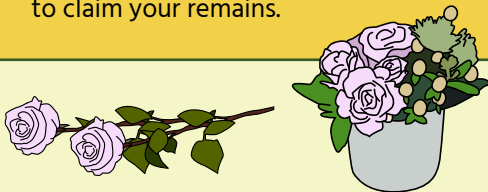
A **Control of Remains Form** says what will happen to your body after you pass away.

### KEEP IN MIND

- ▲ Any prepaid plans, like a ceremony or plot, should be listed here.
- ▲ You can choose anyone 18+ to be your Agent. They'll be the person to carry out your final wishes.

### IF YOU DON'T

- ▲ A law will choose a family member to make these plans. This person may not know how you want to be honored after passing away.
- ▲ It could take a long time for someone who isn't family, like a partner or friend, to claim your remains.



## HOW DO I MAKE THESE DOCUMENTS?

You don't need a lawyer to make any of these, but be careful if you make them on your own.

**Documents that are incomplete or filled out incorrectly might be ignored.**

If you are 60+, live in NYC, and can't afford a lawyer, but would like help with life planning, reach out to **Volunteers of Legal Service**, for help with life planning.



Call (347) 521-5704 and say "I am interested in making some life planning documents. Can you help me complete an intake form?" OR fill out an intake form online at [volsprobono.org](http://volsprobono.org).

You can also reach out to these places for help:

**The City Bar Justice Center's Elder Law Project**  
(212) 382-6658

**NYLAG's Advance Planning Practice**  
(212) 613-6514

If you are HIV+ or LGBTQ:  
**GMHC**  
(212) 367-1054

If you are living with cancer:  
**The City Bar Justice Center's Cancer Advocacy Project**  
(212) 382-4785

**Legal Services NYC**  
(917) 661-4500

**This guide is for informational use only and is not a source of legal advice. If you need legal advice, talk to a qualified lawyer.**

This project was produced through **Public Access Design**, a program of the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP). Public Access Design projects use design to make complex urban issues accessible to the New Yorkers most affected by them. [publicaccessdesign.org](http://publicaccessdesign.org)



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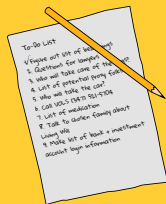
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## **The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)**

is a nonprofit that uses the power of art and design to increase meaningful civic engagement in partnership with marginalized communities. [welcometocup.org](http://welcometocup.org)

## **Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLSO)**

**Senior Law Project** provides low-income seniors access to free civil legal services so they can age in place with dignity and without fear of homelessness. [volso.org](http://volso.org)

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