

## Conversations Worth Having

### Advance Care Planning

Take a moment and ask yourself these questions:

If your mom was in a coma, would you feel comfortable making health care decisions for her?

Are you caring for aging parents, an ill spouse or family member?

Let's face it – talking about a time when someone you love is too ill or hurt to make their own decisions makes people uncomfortable.

But, Advance Care Planning significantly reduces stress, depression and anxiety in family members and caregivers who know the wishes of their loved ones and can act with confidence if needed. It's so important to have conversations so that you are sure you know what they want.

### Substitute Decision Makers

A Substitute Decision Maker (or SDM) is an individual chosen to speak for someone if they can't speak for themselves. It's an important part of Advance Care Planning, a process of reflecting on and communicating your future health care wishes to others.

If you are a Substitute Decision Maker (or think you might be) for a loved one, it's important to ask yourself these questions:

- Do I understand what's important to my loved one? Do I know their health and personal care wishes?
- Am I willing to communicate those wishes, even if they aren't what I would choose?
- Am I able to communicate clearly with health care professionals and ask questions?
- Can I make difficult decisions, even during stressful times?
- Do I know what the legal requirements are in Ontario?

### Advance Care Planning Conversations

These don't have to be negative or depressing conversations. Dr. Atul Gawande in his book "Being Mortal" talks about a patient who told him that being able to eat chocolate ice cream and watch football was important to him and made him happy. This man's family used this information when making health care decisions for him – "will this hospital stay or medical procedure allow Dad to still eat ice cream and watch football?"

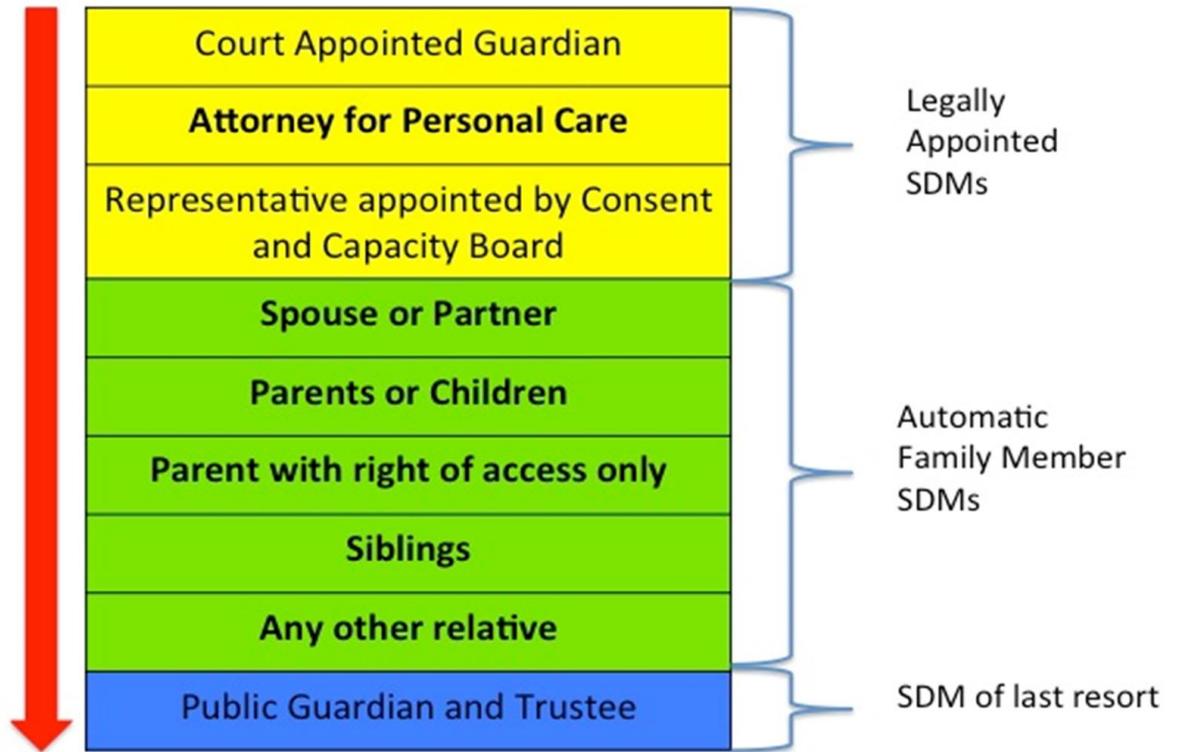
Don't be left wondering what to say – take the time to talk to your loved ones today and learn what's important to them. It's one of the best ways that we can care for each other.

Need help getting started? Visit [acpww.ca](http://acpww.ca) for resources, including workbooks, conversation starters, videos and information.

## What is Advance Care Planning?

- 1) **Deciding** who will make health care decisions for you if you are mentally incapable of speaking for yourself. In Ontario, you can do this two ways:
  - a. Confirm your automatic future Substitute Decision Maker (SDM) from the hierarchy in the Health Care Consent Act (Ontario Law) **OR**
  - b. Prepare a Power of Attorney for Personal Care
- 2) **Having conversations** with your SDM (and other loved ones) about your wishes, values and beliefs and anything else that will help your SDM understand how you would like to be cared for in the event you are mentally incapable of making health care decisions yourself.

### Hierarchy of SDMs HCCA s. 20



Ontario Health Care Consent Act, 1996

#### **In a survey of people in Waterloo Wellington**

**92%** believe Advance Care Planning conversations will make it easier for their loved ones

**95%** believe it is important to have Advance Care Planning conversations with their Substitute Decision Maker

(survey conducted in fall 2015)