



How Does a PAD Work?

A PAD is a tool used to plan for a psychiatric crisis. During a psychiatric crisis, someone, probably the doctor treating you, determines that you are not capable of making psychiatric decisions. The doctor will then use the instructions your agent takes from the PAD as a guideline for your treatment.

When Should You Create a PAD?

You should create your PAD when you are well or competent. You are not as likely to make good or well thought out decisions while you are having a psychiatric crisis. Additionally, if you are not capable of making mental health decisions when you - create your PAD, your wishes are less likely to be followed.



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Psychiatric Advance Directives

What they are and why you need one

What is a Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD)?

A PAD is a legal document, created by you, that specifies your instructions for your mental health treatment during a psychiatric emergency or crisis.

In Arkansas, you must name a person to express those instructions for you. This person is called an Agent. The document that names the agent and includes the PAD instructions is called a Durable Power of Attorney.

Why Do You Need a PAD?

A PAD gives you more control over your treatment decisions. During a mental health emergency, the PAD acts as your voice, allowing you to provide information such as what hospital staff can do to help you, who you want involved in your treatment decisions, who to notify if you require hospitalization, and what medications do and do not work for you.

In addition to giving you power over your mental health treatment, a PAD is a useful planning and evaluation tool. Writing a PAD requires you to examine what is and is not working with your current treatment and what has and has not worked for your recovery in the past. A PAD can open up and improve communication between you and your regular mental healthcare provider by allowing you to discuss treatment options with each other.

A PAD also provides mental health professionals in a crisis setting with a brief overview of your medical history and helps your loved ones assist you during a psychiatric crisis. Without a PAD, your loved ones and mental health professionals can only guess how you would like to be treated during a crisis.

How do you create a PAD?

There is no *one* way to write a PAD, but it is a good idea to seek assistance from someone who is trustworthy and who is aware of your treatment history. You should choose a reliable person, such as a family member or close friend, to be your agent and discuss this decision with him/her. You may request fill-in-the-blank PAD forms from your provider or the Division of Behavioral Health Services. You may also draft your own document titled “Psychiatric Advance Directive.” Your PAD must name an agent and must be signed and dated by you, two competent witnesses 18 years or older, and your agent.

What to Do With Your Completed PAD?

Once you have completed your PAD, make multiple copies of it and keep one for yourself, placing it somewhere easily accessible during an emergency. The remaining copies should be given to your agent, your regular mental healthcare provider, and to hospitals where you have gone in the past for psychiatric treatment and should be placed in your medical record. You should also consider giving a copy to a family member or friend. To ensure that the professionals treating you are aware that you have a PAD, you can write on an index card (or the “business cards” provided in the back of the fill-in-the-blank forms) that you have a PAD, where it can be found and contact information. Then place the index card in your wallet or purse.

Additional Resources for PAD Information:

- ❖ Arkansas Department of Human Services – Division of Behavioral Health Services:
<http://www.arkansas.gov/dhs/dmhs/>
- ❖ Mental Health Council of Arkansas: <http://www.mhca.org/>
- ❖ NAMI Arkansas:
<http://www.nami.org/MSTemplate.cfm?MicrositeID=182>
- ❖ The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law:
<http://www.bazelon.org/>
- ❖ National Resource Center on Psychiatric Advanced Directives:
www.nrc-pad.org