Powers of Attorney Explained

A power of attorney must be signed while your loved one can still understand it. Don't wait for a crisis.

Types of POA

- [ ] Durable financial power of attorney: handles money and property.
- [ ] Healthcare power of attorney: makes medical decisions if they can't.
- [ ] Living will: states wishes about life support.
- [ ] Limited POA: for one task, like selling a house.

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» Ask whether the financial POA is 'durable' (stays valid if they lose capacity).

» Ask if it's effective now or only upon incapacity, and how that's proven.

When to establish

- [ ] Now, while your loved one is able to make decisions.
- [ ] Before surgery or a major health change.
- [ ] After a dementia diagnosis, as soon as possible.

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» Without a POA, family may need a court guardianship, which is slower and costlier.

» Review existing documents after moves, deaths or divorces.

Choosing an agent

- [ ] Who is trustworthy, organized and lives close enough?
- [ ] Who will follow your loved one's wishes, not their own?
- [ ] Who is the backup if the first choice can't serve?

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» Talk with the chosen agent before naming them.

» Give copies to banks, doctors and the hospital.

Notes