

# TIPS FOR POWERS OF ATTORNEY (BEYOND THE BASICS)

Powers of Attorney are documents that allow a person (the “principal”) to appoint someone else (the “agent”) to make decisions for him or her. In Illinois, there are two types: Property (or financial) power of attorney, and Health care (or medical) power of attorney.

The Illinois Power of Attorney Act says that the appointed person should do what you would have wanted them to do. There are steps you can take to make sure this happens:

1. **Choose your agent very carefully.** If you are considering appointing someone in your Power of Attorney, talk with them about whether they are willing and able to take on this responsibility for you. Consider how well they know you and what is most important to you. Find out whether they are willing to do what you would want instead of inserting their own morals or preferences. A person who may be tempted to use your money for their own benefit would not make a good Power of Attorney agent.
2. **Discuss your wishes early and often.** Your Power of Attorney allows a person to make decisions for you when you are no longer able to make them. The more information you give your agent and other support people, the more likely they will follow your wishes.  
**TheConversationProject.org** has free resources that may be helpful to get started.
3. **Set up limits in your Power of Attorney documents.**

These may include:

- a. Your specific wishes for medical treatments.

*Example:* I do not want my agent to consent to me receiving radiation or chemotherapy treatment for any reason.



- b. Requiring your agent or your bank to give financial statements to another trusted person to review periodically.

**Example:** I direct my bank and any financial institution I use in the future to grant [trusted person] access to view my financial statements.

- c. Requiring your agent to get a second signature for any major financial transactions.

**Example:** If my agent wishes to sell my home, she must consult [trusted person] and obtain a second signature from them on any contracts for the sale of the property.

- d. Prohibiting your agent from making gifts out of your accounts.

**Example:** My agent is not authorized to make gifts of my cash, property, or other assets.

Finally, do not sign anything you do not understand or feel unsure about. You have the right to revoke a Power of Attorney for any reason.

For more detailed information about both types of Powers of Attorney, visit [illinoislegalaid.org](http://illinoislegalaid.org).

## FUNDING

*This project is supported by the U.S Administration for Community Living (ACL). Views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent official views of, or an endorsement by, ACL or the U.S. government.*



**LSC** | America's Partner  
for Equal Justice  
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

To support our work,  
visit [pslegal.org/donate](http://pslegal.org/donate).

Find legal resources  
and apply for help  
on Illinois Legal  
Aid Online. Visit  
[illinoislegalaid.org](http://illinoislegalaid.org)  
or scan code.



**PRAIRIE STATE  
LEGAL SERVICES**

Administrative Office  
303 North Main Street  
Suite 600  
Rockford, IL 61101  
815-965-2134  
[info@pslegal.org](mailto:info@pslegal.org)  
[pslegal.org](http://pslegal.org)

