Week Three Glossary

Advance directive: Any document that records your health care wishes ahead of time, such as a health care proxy or a living will. The MOLST form includes a checklist of the advance directives a person has completed.

Alternate agent: The backup person named on a health care proxy. They step in if your first choice is unable, unwilling, or unavailable to act.

Beneficiary: A person or organization who receives something from your will, living trust, or accounts. The death binder inventory asks you to keep your list of beneficiaries with your account statements.

Burial plans and final preparations: The section of your binder where you record funeral home information, burial or cremation wishes, the deed for a cemetery plot, service wishes like a favorite song or reading, and an obituary draft. It gives your family clear direction and the comfort of knowing they are carrying out your wishes.

CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation): Emergency treatment to restart the heart or breathing when either stops. On the MOLST form it is the first choice a person makes: attempt CPR or choose a DNR order.

Death binder: One safe place to keep the documents and information your loved ones will need to handle your affairs. Some people call it a next-of-kin box or a legacy box. It also holds your values and wishes in your own words.

Death certificate: The official record issued after someone dies. The guide advises families to request multiple copies, perhaps up to ten, because many accounts and offices will ask for one.

DNR (Do Not Resuscitate order): A medical order that CPR will not be attempted if the heart or breathing stops. On the MOLST form it appears as “Allow Natural Death.”

Durable Power of Attorney (POA): A legal document that names someone to make financial decisions when you can no longer do so. If finances are complicated, or you want exceptions to how your money is used, an attorney can draw it up. It is not the same as a health care proxy, which covers medical decisions only.

Estate: Everything you own, including property, accounts, and belongings. Your will or living trust says where it goes after you die.

Executor: The person you name in your will to make sure your wishes are carried out.

Five Wishes: A guided document that helps you think through medical, emotional, and spiritual questions and start the conversation with your health care proxy, your providers, and your family. It covers who makes care decisions for you, which treatments you do or don't want, how comfortable you want to be, how you want to be treated, and what you want your loved ones to know.

Health care agent: The person named in a health care proxy to make decisions for you. People often just say "my proxy." Choose someone you trust who knows your core values, because no one can predict every decision that will come up.

Health care proxy (HCP): A legal document that names the person who will make health care decisions if you are unable to make them yourself. Your proxy only decides when you no longer can. The Next Steps slide says to print the form, name your agent, have two witnesses sign, and get copies to your doctors and family.

Legacy letter: A personal letter to loved ones, shared before or after your death, that reflects on your experiences, values, and hopes. It can be written or recorded as a video or voice message. Hospicare volunteers are trained to help patients create them.

Life-sustaining treatment: Medical treatment that keeps the body going when it cannot on its own, such as CPR or a breathing machine. The MOLST form is where a person records choices about it.

Living trust: A legal arrangement that "owns" the property you put into it and gives instructions for passing it on after you die. Your trustee carries out those instructions. Unlike a will, a trust does not go through probate. A simple estate may be set up online, and a complicated one usually calls for an estate planning attorney.

Living will: A written statement of your decisions about end-of-life care that you share with your loved ones and your health care proxy.

MOLST (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment): A form, completed with your physician, that records your wishes for end-of-life treatment if you cannot decide for

yourself. It is a medical order, so a physician must sign it. Without a health care proxy, it guides medical decisions. With one, it guides your agent's choices. The guide is clear that it does not replace having a proxy. The patient keeps the original, and the physician keeps a copy, so it travels with you between care settings. This form is generally for people with serious health conditions.

POA: See Durable Power of Attorney.

Probate: The court process that validates a will and distributes what a person owned. Assets in a living trust skip this step and go directly to beneficiaries.

Surrogate: The person who makes medical decisions for someone who cannot decide and has no health care proxy. The MOLST form says this person is chosen from a list set by New York State law. That is one reason to name a proxy yourself.

Trustee: The person you nominate to manage a living trust, hold title to its property and funds, and make sure your wishes are carried out.

Will: A legal document that says how your assets and estate will be distributed when you die. It names your executor and can also cover care of minors, gifts to loved ones or favorite charities, and funeral or burial arrangements. You can create one through an online service or with an estate lawyer.

Witness: Someone who watches you sign a document.