Our Commitment:
Understanding what is important to you and providing health care that helps you reach your goals.

For more information contact your local VA facility.

Tell Us What Matters to You

If you are facing serious illness, you already have a lot to deal with. But it’s worth it to step back for a moment and ask yourself two questions: “What’s important to me?” and “What do I want from my life and from my health care?”

Then, talk about these questions with your VA health care team and with people you trust. Based on your values and beliefs, your health care provider can help you decide which services and treatments would – and would not – be likely to help you reach your goals.

Adapted from a publication developed at Fargo VA Health Care System
How can your health care help you achieve your goals?

If you have a serious illness, it’s important to think about what you would like to achieve through your health care. Different people want different things. What matters to you should guide decisions about your treatment.

What would you like your health care to help you do?

- Ease symptoms so you feel more comfortable?
- Stay or become independent?
- Cure an illness, or improve quality of life when a cure is not possible?
- Live longer?
- Support loved ones or caregivers?

Think about it — then talk with your health care team about:

- Your health care goals – what you want your health care to help you achieve or avoid.
- Which treatments and services might help you reach your goals, and which ones you would or would not want.

What are life-sustaining treatments?

Life-sustaining treatments are treatments that might help you live longer when you would be expected to die otherwise.

Whether they are likely to work depends on your medical problems. They do not cure disease or chronic illness. Sometimes they are used for a short time to get a person through a health crisis such as a sudden serious illness, or when a chronic illness gets worse unexpectedly.

Some people would want life-sustaining treatments, and others would not. Some people might want one life-sustaining treatment but not others. Decisions about life-sustaining treatments should be made based on your goals and preferences.

If you have a serious illness, talk with your VA doctor about what matters to you.

Set up a time to talk with your doctor or others on your VA health care team about what really matters to you as you look ahead. At that meeting, talk with them about your medical condition, what matters to you in your life, and how your health care might help you achieve your goals.

When you and your health care provider decide on a plan that will best support your goals, it will be written in your medical record. This plan can be updated at any time.

For more information about setting your health care goals, visit www.ethics.va.gov/for_veterans.asp. Or ask your VA health care team — they are here to help.