

The legal framework of the *trusted companion*

A summary for the first conversation — what French law says, what this status changes in practice, and how to set it up.

Reference translation. This role and the underlying law (Code de la santé publique) are specific to France; the document is provided in English for understanding, not as a legal text in itself.

A status recognised under French law

The trusted companion is a status created by law, enshrined in the French Public Health Code. This person accompanies, informs and supports anyone in moments when vulnerability makes decisions difficult to face alone. Not a doctor, a lawyer, or a therapist: a neutral perspective, a voice that carries yours, a presence that does not judge.

Article L1111-6 of the French Public Health Code — Act n° 2016-87 of 2 February 2016 (Claeys-Leonetti Act)

Trusted companion ≠ emergency contact

The most common confusion. Hospitals ask for both at admission — yet these are two radically different statuses.

Legal status · Art. L1111-6 CSP

Trusted companion

- Status created by law, enshrined in the French Public Health Code
- Can accompany you at any medical consultation and hospitalisation — this is a legal right
- Carries your wishes to caregivers if you can no longer express them
- Their testimony is consulted as a priority by the medical team before any serious decision
- Designated by a signed written document, revocable at any time

Simple administrative contact

Emergency contact

- No legal status — simply a contact to reach in case of emergency
- No right of accompaniment at medical consultations
- Cannot carry your medical wishes or intervene in care decisions
- Their opinion is not consulted as a priority, no legal obligation
- Recorded on a simple administrative form at admission

What I actually do, within this framework

01 Accompanying you to appointments: consultations, family meetings, institutional interviews.

03 Helping you decide, never deciding for you.

05 Watching over a loved one from a distance when you cannot be there day to day.

02 Speaking on your behalf if you can no longer express yourself, once designated in writing.

04 Maintaining absolute confidentiality, governed by a code of ethics.

06 Can be a loved one, a friend, or an independent professional like myself.

In practice

How do I designate you?

A dated, signed written document is enough. Given to your doctor, the hospital, or kept at home. The official form is available on request.

What about advance directives?

A separate, complementary document: your advance directives say what you want; the trusted companion says who speaks for you. The law has made them binding for doctors since 2016.

Can I revoke it at any time?

Yes, without having to justify it. A simple written statement is enough. This status serves your autonomy, never the other way round.

Confidentiality

Everything shared remains strictly confidential, governed by a rigorous code of ethics and never passed on to third parties.