

Documents and Directives

Here is some good advice regarding the documents and directives you should prepare to cover circumstances where an illness or medical condition would render you incapable of making your own decisions regarding end-of-life care.

Documents You Should Have

- A living will
- A durable power of attorney for health care (surrogate)
- A letter to my physician
- DNR order (Do Not Resuscitate)

Where to Keep Your Documents

- Keep your Advance Directive (living will and appointment of surrogate form) in a conspicuous place in your home. **NEVER** place these documents in a safe deposit box since they will not be readily available when needed.

Who Should Have A Copy

- Your surrogate and alternate surrogate(s)
- Your nearest relatives
- Your physician (make certain these documents are placed in your file)
- Your attorney
- The medical facility where you have a medical record and would go if hospitalized. It is also a good idea to keep copies in your car and to have a label on the glove compartment or driver's license that reads "living will on file." You may also want to put a similar label on your home's entrance or on the refrigerator door.
- All copies of your Advance Directive should be signed in **BLUE** ink by you, even though the text may be a photocopy. A photocopied signature is not a legal document.

Where You Can Obtain These Document

- You can obtain an Advance Directive (living will and appointment of surrogate) at no cost from your local hospital, several websites or from Hemlock Society of Florida, Inc., P.O. Box 121093, West Melbourne, FL 32912-1093. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped #10 business envelope. If you would like the complete Advance Directive packet, send a 9" x 12" self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Do Not Resuscitate Order

- A pre-hospital DNR order can also be obtained from the Hemlock Society of Florida at the above address, your physician, or the Florida Dept of Health. The DNR order is yellow/goldenrod in color and must be signed by you and the physician. If you are admitted to the hospital you may need to complete an in-hospital DNR.

If You Are A Patient, You Have the Right:

- to have an Advance Directive (living will and appointment of surrogate forms) with the expectation that your attending physician and the hospital will honor its provisions as required by law
- to receive answers to your health care questions for any provider of services
- to be a fully informed participant in health care decisions
- to obtain a clear explanation of all proposed procedures, their risks and side effects, potential problems in recovery, probability of success and ultimate effect on quality of life and prognosis
- to discuss your condition with another doctor or specialist at your request and expense. This may or may not be paid for by your insurance carrier.
- To access all information in your medical record.

If You Are Hospitalized, You have the Right:

- to a complete evaluation of your medical condition and your prognosis, with or without treatment, before you consent to any additional test or procedure
- to refuse any particular drug, test, procedure or treatment
- to have access to visitors and to others by phone
- to privacy regarding information about your medical condition and treatment
- to leave the hospital regardless of your physical condition. You may be asked, but cannot be required, to sign a release saying you do so against your physician's best judgment.
- To stay in the hospital if you feel you are too sick to leave. Your insurance may not cover the extended stay.
- To be informed of what your health care requirements will be after you leave the hospital
- To receive a complete copy of information in your medical record after you leave the hospital. You will have to ask for it and there will probably be a fee for this service.

If You Are Terminally Ill, You Have the Right:

- to demand that no one in your family be told of your terminal prognosis, if that is your wish
- to refuse treatment even if you will die without it. To demand and to receive adequate medication for pain control even if it will shorten your life.

In emergency-care situations (emergency room, paramedics), it is imperative that you have your medical directive and/or the person designated as your surrogate with you to make sure your rights are honored. Otherwise standard emergency procedures will be followed. If you do not wish to be resuscitated, be certain the DNR order is available. There is a "tear-off" portion of the DNR form which can be laminated and attached to a chain to be worn as a necklace so that the DNR is with you at all times.