

Planning for the Care of Your Loved Ones Part IV

By Karen Cerrato, LCSW, EAP Program Coordinator

After speaking to your family then it is suggested you follow these steps:

1. You can get a living will form and/or a healthcare representative form for health care from your health care provider. It is suggested that both forms be used. The Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990 requires all health care facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes that receive Medicare and Medicaid funding to provide written information about advanced directives upon admission
2. Review, complete, sign and date the forms. These forms are legal; however you do not need to hire a lawyer for them. Please be advised that state laws and the format of the forms can be different. Some states require notarization, others just require signature of witnesses.
3. Give copies to your family members and physicians. It is recommended that you bring a copy if you are admitted to a hospital.

Even with all the benefits stated before, an AHRQ study noted that about 75% of Americans do not have written directives for their loved ones. Also less than 50% of people with terminal illness had advanced directives.

Those statistics were sobering for me. I have made some tiny steps towards working on advanced directives in my family. I've had some conversations with my loved ones and now we know what our wishes are and we have some knowledge on how to make our wishes known to the health care providers. The next step is to complete the forms and give it to the health care providers. This way there will be no questions about the care me or my family want to receive if a health crisis occurs. I just realized that it's their decisions and I'm just their voice. The advanced directives will support those decisions.

The following websites might be helpful to review:

<http://estate.findlaw.com> <http://www.helpstartshere.org> (click on seniors and aging)

Of course if you have more specific questions or concerns regarding advanced directives, please speak to your physician or lawyer.

Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance for all of life's challenges.

It's free, confidential and open to your family members.

Check us out on-line at www.solutions-eap.com