

Living Wills and Health Care Directives

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Recent headlines about the Schiavo family in Florida created a multitude of calls to Senior Approved Services from family members who wanted clarification on what it means to designate an individual to make health care decisions on behalf of a loved one that can not make his or her wishes known.

Questions about why the spouse's decision wasn't protected from legal actions brought by the parents of a married adult child as well as the intended intervention that our United States Congress attempted have furthered this confusion for each of us.

I did a little research on behalf of the families (that phoned us) and believe the following information that we passed on will be of interest to you as well. We found most of this information at <http://www.abanet.org/aging/> The American Bar Association web site.

Who to Choose?

Who should you select to speak on your behalf in a case where you are physically and/or mentally not able to state your wishes? The following ten guidelines will help you decide. You should think about naming one primary person and a secondary back up in case your first choice is not available for some reason.

Your Health Care Agent, Proxy, Representative, Attorney-In-Fact, Surrogate, Patient Advocate, Guardian of Person (all of these names mean the same thing and will vary in use state to state) should ...

Meet the legal criteria in your state for acting as agent or proxy
Be willing to speak on your behalf
Be able to act on your wishes and separate his/her own feelings from yours
Live close by or could travel to be at your side if needed
Know you well and understand what's important to you
Be someone you trust with your life
Be willing to talk with you now about sensitive issues and will listen to your wishes
Be likely to be available long into the future
Be able to handle conflicting opinions between family members, friends, and medical personnel
Be a strong advocate in the face of an unresponsive doctor or institution

Who Cannot Be a Proxy?

How Much Authority Should You Give Your Agent?

Who Should Have a Record of Your Wishes?

Who Determines Quality of Life?

Continue reading the complete article
http://www.qualityeldercare.com/News_Ezine_Linking_Seniors_Caregivers_and_Healthcare_Professionals-2005-April.html#d

Founder of Senior Approved Services a national network of products, resources and services endorsed by seniors.