



IF I CAN'T SPEAK FOR MYSELF, THEN WHAT?

Of the things we'd rather not deal with, "what happens if I can't communicate or make decisions" is a big one. Even among people with serious illness, less than 1/2 have completed paperwork to specify their preferences. Yet people who *have* completed legal forms report less anxiety, greater ability to direct their care, and a better understanding with their family and physician.

DOCUMENTS YOU NEED IN CONNECTICUT

- *Durable Power of Attorney (POA)*: designates the person you trust with your financial and legal affairs.
- *Living Will*: describes the kinds of medical treatments you want or do not want if you become incapacitated. You have many options- you can state that you want everything done or that you want to limit medical intervention. It can be as specific or general as you wish.
- *Appointment of Healthcare Representative*: names the individual who will express your health care wishes in the event that you are unable to do so yourself. This person will use your living will as a guide. It's important to name someone who knows what you want, but will weigh the pros and cons before making decisions.

HELPFUL TOOLS FOR ADVANCED DIRECTIVES

The following tools can help you complete the legal documents yourself, but if you have unique situations (like property that is jointly owned or in another state) it is best to see an elder lawyer.

- *Your Rights to Make Healthcare Decisions: A Summary of Connecticut Law* from CT's office of the Attorney General. It includes the forms for Health Care Representative and Living Will.
- www.CTElderLaw.org is a public service of the CT Legal Services, Inc. provides forms and answers frequently asked questions.

- The American Bar Association Commission on Law & Aging's *Consumer Tool Kits for Health Care Advanced Planning* point out options and leads you through the decision process. www.abanet.org/aging/toolkit.
- *Five Wishes*, a Living Will guide from the non-profit Aging with Dignity, is easy to use and helps you express how you want to be treated medically, emotionally and spiritually. www.agingwithdignity.org.

Call Linda at 203.458.4338 for copies of these documents.

CAREGIVER TIPS: HOW TO START END OF LIFE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR LOVED ONE

- Think through your own end of life wishes. Set an example by writing your own living will.
- Say "I need your help with this so I can do what you want" and "You may not need to talk, but I need to."
- Ask your loved one to describe what type of funeral they would want.
- Be a patient listener. Open communication is key.
- Planning may take place gradually- look for a little progress at a time.
- Remember it's better to talk about end of life issues in the living room rather than the ER.
- Advance planning is a work in progress. Reexamine your wishes whenever any of the "5D's" occur: 1- new Decade, 2- Death of loved one, 3- Divorce, 4- new Diagnosis, and 5- significant Decline in condition.

QUOTABLE QUOTE

Life is not about waiting around for the storm to leave, it is about learning to dance in the rain...

- Anon

AS A CAREGIVER, WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN CONCERNS?

Let us know by contacting Jane Olson at 203.458.4259 or email jolson@vna-commh.org.

The Caregivers' Corner



for more information.

Call LifeTime Solutions at 203.458.5990 or (toll free) 1.866.968.7587

- Yearly pre-pay: \$420 (includes installation)
- Monthly fee: \$35
- Installation: \$35 (one time fee)

Subscription information:

also available.

LifeTime Solutions, the private duty affiliate of VNA Community Healthcare, is now offering Link to Life®, a personal emergency response system that provides immediate, round-the-clock help at the touch of a button. Additional services, like medication reminders are

NEW PERSONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM



753 Boston Post Rd.
Guilford, Connecticut 06437
Phone: 203.458.4200