

Advanced Directives

WA STATE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



JUNE 2015

None of us like to think of ourselves or those we love being unable to care for ourselves, make decisions or manage our own affairs, but as we all know life can give us unexpected challenges. We should give thought and consideration to how we want medical and financial decisions made if there is a time when we cannot make them for ourselves. This month's tip sheet focuses on a "Living Will" and the two components that are included in it.



Why Create a Road Map?

The first step to getting started is to create a road map for your loved ones to follow. Put your desires in writing by completing three important documents: **a living will, a health-care power of attorney, and a letter of instruction.** Having a road map prepared in advance keeps you in charge about important decisions about medical treatment— even when you're no longer capable.

What do you need?

Each document for the road map serves a different purpose. The first two living will and health-care power of attorney, are legal instructions known as advance directives.

A living will lets medical professionals and your family know which medical treatments

you want or don't want to receive. This will only be used under specific medical conditions and if you are unable to make decisions on your behalf.

A health-care power of attorney

has you appoint someone to make health care decisions for you when you are unable to do so. Most people choose someone who is comfortable talking with medical professionals and who will honor their final wishes. In the state of WA a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care does not need to be notarized. This is different than a regular durable power of attorney which only covers financial issues. In WA State this does not need to be notarized as well.

A letter of instruction, the third part of the road map, isn't a legal document but helps loved ones by providing them with pertinent information. This is a three part letter that should be included with the will. The first part has names of contact people and instructions for planning a memorial. The second part covers all the financial affairs with lists of accounts and phone numbers. This information, along with passwords should also be given to whoever is designated as your financial power of attorney or your spouse or other designated person. In the third section, this may include whom you wish to give your meaningful possessions to and any special messages you would like to send.

How Do I Get Started?

Many people choose to first consult with an attorney, but it is not required. Even though these are legal documents, it's not necessary for an attorney to write them. You have the option to prepare this yourself. The advantage of having an attorney write them up is that you automatically have

someone to review them periodically. You should review your road map every few years. These are important decisions and your views may change over time.

Talk with your family members and friends about your wishes. This is not always an easy discussion but an important

one. Keep a copy of your road map in a safe but assessable place. Let family members know where to locate it in case an emergency occurs and is needed. Go over your road map with your medical provider also so they are aware of your wishes and make sure they have a copy.

Attached are resources on where to get started with your road map.

www.uslivingwillregistry.com/

www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-11-2010/

lfm_living_will_and_health_care_power_of_attorney.html

www.honormywishes.org/

Washington State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) helps employees and their family members resolve personal or work-related problems. <http://www.hr.wa.gov/EAP/> Toll-free 1-877-313-4455

