

# Alexian Brothers Hospice

## **Advanced Directives**

There are various types of legal documents that can be used to clarify your medical choices:

A Living Will is a health care declaration which simply documents a person's wishes concerning treatment when those wishes can no longer be personally communicated. Generally, a living will describes certain life prolonging treatments. You, the declarant, indicate which treatments you do or do not want applied to you in the event you either suffer from a terminal illness or are in a permanent vegetative state. A living will does not become effective unless you are incapacitated; until then you'll be able to say what treatments you do or don't want. They usually require a certification by your doctor and another doctor that you are either suffering from a terminal illness or permanently unconscious before they become effective as well. This means that if you suffer a heart attack, for example, but otherwise do not have any terminal illness and are not permanently unconscious, a living will does not have any effect. You would still be resuscitated, even if you had a living will indicating that you don't want life prolonging procedures. A living will is only used when your ultimate recovery is hopeless.

A Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare is a legal document that gives someone else the authority to make health care decisions for you in the event you are incapacitated. It becomes active any time you are unconscious or unable to make medical decisions. The person you designate to make health care decisions on your behalf is supposed to consider what you would want, so be sure to talk with them about it. It may be a difficult conversation, but you're asking someone to take on a great burden for you - letting him or her know what you want lessens that burden.

Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR) is a request not to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops or if you stop breathing. (Unless given other instructions, hospital staff will try to help all patients whose heart has stopped or who have stopped breathing.) You can use an advance directive form or tell your doctor that you don't want to be resuscitated. In this case, a DNR order is put in your medical chart by your doctor. DNR orders are accepted by doctors and hospitals in all states.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can assist you in making these difficult end of life choices.

Alexian Brothers Hospice  
1-630-233-5100  
<mailto:HomeHealth@alexian.net>