

ELDER LAW REVIEW

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Health Care Directives

A health care directive provides your loved ones direction as to what medical care you do or do not want if you are incapacitated or unable to communicate your health care decisions. Previously, health professionals utilized a medical power of attorney to designate agents and a living will to specify medical decisions. Those two documents were combined into the document we now refer to as a health care directive. A health care directive allows you to:

- Appoint another person (called an agent) to make health care decisions for you if you become unable to make or communicate decisions for yourself
- Or, leave written instructions so that others can make decisions based on your wishes and preferences
- Or, do both – appoint a health care agent and leave instructions

Remember: The most important thing about the health care directive is that you, your family and your doctor each understand your wishes.

If you have a completed health care directive, provide a copy of your health care directive to your healthcare provider. Make it part of your medical chart.

If you don't already have a health care directive, talk about your medical care and treatment wishes with your family and health care team before preparing one. These decisions may be difficult. Your health care team will help you understand how these decisions may affect you.

Once a health care directive is created, it can be changed or revoked as long as you are alive and competent.

April 16, 2016, is National Healthcare Decisions Day, a day designated for discussing, reviewing, and writing health care directives. Medical professionals are encouraged to “lead by example and encourage everyone in your organization or facility to engage in health care planning and execute their own advance directives before April 16, so they will be in the best position to help others with theirs.”

The Center for Medicare Advocacy contains a few resources concerning National Healthcare Decisions Day and they can be found here: <http://www.medicareadvocacy.org/national-healthcare-decisions-day-april-16-2012/>.

It is suggested that all people, even those not currently ill or having surgery, make sure their loved ones are aware of their wishes. So take the time to review your health care directive or to create one with your health care wishes.

Pluto Legal, PLLC offers prospective clients a NO-cost, NO-obligation consultation. This is a great opportunity for you to become informed of the options available to you for your Estate Planning and Medical Assistance Planning needs.

To learn more about Pluto Legal, visit:

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We have many free, educational workshops coming up, so please give us a call, toll free at 1-866-457-3131 or visit our website www.PlutoLegal.com to see when our attorneys will be presenting a workshop in your area.

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