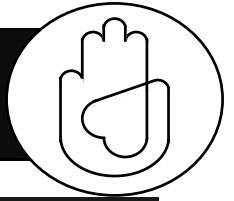


ELDERCARE UPDATE



Partnership for Eldercare: Partnering with Con Edison to help you with the needs of your aging loved ones.
SPRING 2005

Be Prepared: ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Recent headlines have thrust end-of-life issues and advance directives—living wills and health care proxies—into the spotlight. If you haven't already, you may be thinking about putting these legal documents in place both for your older relatives and yourself. It is not easy to talk about incapacity and dying; however, proper planning now can allow you and your family to avoid future difficulties.

Understanding the Problem

It sometimes happens that decisions about medical treatments must be made when a loved one is too sick or unable to express his or her wishes. Sometimes a serious illness can cloud thinking, as may the medicines used to treat the illness. This could happen with Alzheimer's disease, after surgery, terminal illness, coma, or a stroke.

When people are dying, there is often a point when they are no longer able to make their own medical decisions. When these things happen, you may be asked to work with doctors to make decisions that your loved one would want.

But making medical decisions for someone else can be difficult. Family members may disagree with one another or with the doctor. They may not understand the patient's condition or they may not be sure what the patient would want.

Health Care Proxy (sometimes called Health Care Power of Attorney) forms and Living Wills are types of advance directives. *Health Care Proxies and Living Wills are legal documents that allow people to state what they would want done medically in the case of a terminal illness or in the event of a coma or stroke.*

These forms can make it easier for family and friends to make medical decisions when the person can no longer do so.

Health Care Proxies and Living Wills help patients feel more confident that future medical decisions will be based on their wishes. And they help the doctor to recommend treatments that match the patient's wishes.

Caregiving and Advance Directives

Many caregivers have said that these documents helped them a great deal when life-and-death decisions needed to be made. Health Care Proxies and Living Wills also help relieve any guilt that caregivers might feel about stopping or prolonging treatments that aren't likely to help the patient. As a caregiver, your goals are to:

- Help the older person to think about planning for future medical decisions
- Learn the wishes of the older person
- Learn what will be required of you when the older person can't make his or her own medical decisions
- Encourage the older person to complete advance directives

When to Seek Professional Help

Talking to a doctor

There are at least three good reasons why you should encourage the older person to have a discussion with the doctor about planning for life-threatening illnesses:

- The doctor can provide important information about the types of illnesses that make people unable to speak for themselves (such as Alzheimer's), the types of treatments that are sometimes used to prolong life, and how well the treatments work.

- The older person can give the doctor important information about his or her own goals for future medical care.
- The doctor will then know, first hand, what the older person's wishes are which will help him or her to carry them out.

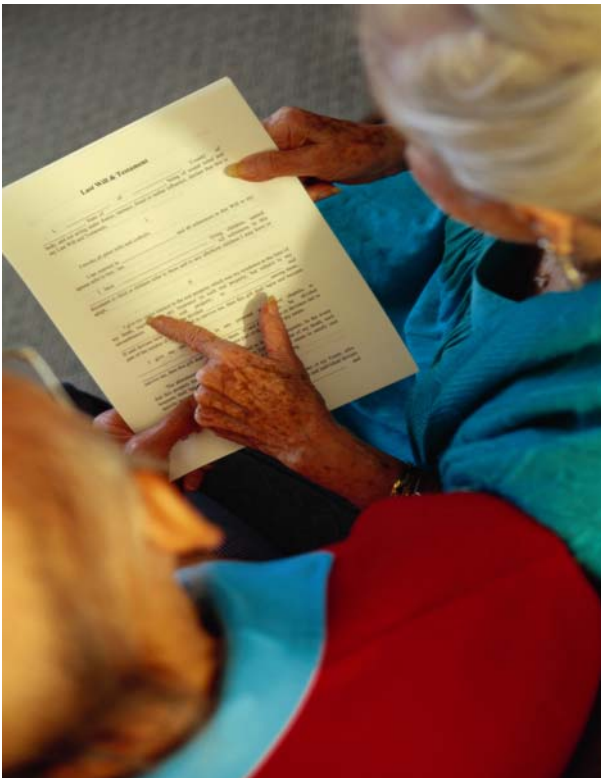
Talking to a lawyer

Lawyers can answer questions about how advance directives should be worded and how they will be interpreted by the courts in your state. They give you forms or develop forms for your special needs. However, you do not have to use a lawyer to make an advance directive.

Talking to a counselor at **PARTNERSHIP FOR ELDERCARE**

We can provide information about: advance directives; health care proxy and living will forms for all states; and, referrals to elder law attorneys and other legal resources. Call **PARTNERSHIP FOR ELDERCARE** today at **212 442-3113** (in NYC) or **1-800-94-ELDER**. Or email us at cpietris@aging.nyc.gov.

And remember, advance directives are not just for older people. Everyone can benefit from having these important legal tools in place.



Partnership for Eldercare

**A resource and referral service
provided to employees of
Con Edison...**

*Our experienced counselors
can help you with:*

Home Care
Assisted Living Facilities
Senior Housing
Nursing Homes
Advance Directives
Elder Law Referrals
Long Distance Caregiving
Medicaid
Medicare
Medigap Insurance
Alzheimer's Disease
Meals on Wheels
Transportation Services
Hospice
Mental Health Services
Home Modification Resources
Long Term Care Insurance
Adult Day Care
Caregiver Stress
Emergency Response Systems
And More!!

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**Please call us for a
confidential telephone consultation.**

☎ 1.800.94.ELDER

212.442.3113 [in NYC]