Advance Directives in Kansas

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Understanding Advance Directives

Advance directives are written documents that allow you to state how you want to be cared for at the end of your life. This is important in case you are not able to tell people what you want because of sickness or injury. Family, friends, and health care professionals can use the advance directives to carry out your wishes in case of terminal illness or an emergency. Three types of advance directives are the durable power of attorney for health care, the living will, and the do not resuscitate directive.

Advance directives can be changed at any time, and should be reviewed and updated periodically.

Talking to Others About Advance Directives

Completing an advance directive is a serious decision. It is a good idea to talk with your physician about advance directives to ensure that you completely understand the options and ramifications of the different types. Consulting an attorney whenever you are contemplating end-of-life decisions may be helpful as well. Your individual situation may make deciding whether to have advance directives, which ones to have, and when to have them more complicated than it seems at first.

Some people find that talking to their family, a trusted friend, or spiritual advisor can be helpful in thinking through these types of decisions. Because advance directives are linked to illness, injury, and death, discussing them can make some people uncomfortable. However, receiving the care that you want at the end of your life is too important to be ignored just because the conversation may be a difficult one.

The American Bar Association has a “toolkit” on advance directives, and it offers these suggestions for beginning a conversation with loved ones about your wishes:

1. Begin the communication process indirectly at first; perhaps a letter or tape recording of some kind. This might help to prepare your loved ones and gives them some time to think about the topic before a face-to-face meeting.
2. Initiate the conversation by talking about the topic in the context of someone else: perhaps a friend, or a celebrity.
3. If you do not feel comfortable having the discussion, consider asking your attorney to lead the conversation.

Advance Planning for Your Pets

The Perpetual Pet Care program at Kansas State University is designed to provide you with an option for planning for the care of your pets after your death. The program offers both care and assistance with finding a home for your pets that meets your requirements. For more information, contact the College of Veterinary Medicine at (785) 532-4013 or e-mail perpetualpetcare@vet.k-state.edu
Discussing your views and wishes with your family might lessen confusion and reduce the possibility of conflict among family members if a crisis occurs.

**How to Complete an Advance Directive**

Advance directives are legal documents. In Kansas, you do not need a lawyer to complete them, as Kansas statutes offer “fill-in-the-blank” forms that you may complete on your own. It is recommended that you use these forms if you are not using the services of an attorney. However, state laws may vary so you want to be sure that you know other states’ requirements if you plan on moving or if you are caring for someone out-of-state. A good place to find more information about a state’s policies on advance directives is the health department or the state office on aging. You can also ask a physician, health care provider or financial or legal advisor for more information.

**After Completing an Advance Directive**

Once you have completed an advance directive, consider talking to your family, friends, and health care providers about your wishes. Tell them the decisions that you have made, as well as the content and location of your advance directive documents. This may help avoid any confusion during a stressful time for those who love you and care for you.

Make sure that you have copies on hand, and give copies to your loved ones, doctors, hospital, financial institution (for Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care) and lawyer, if you have one. You may want to consider carrying a copy with you or at least placing a note in your wallet or purse stating that you have advance directives and where the forms can be found. You may want to consider placing copies of your advance directives in your automobile’s glove box.

There are some private companies that can electronically store your advance directives via the Internet. Others provide bracelets to wear that indicate your wishes. There are typically fees for these services.

**Summary**

Thinking about what you desire at the end of life is an important task. Communicate with your family and health care providers. Keep copies of your advance directives available in case of emergency. If you would like more information about this subject, please see additional K-State Research and Extension publications on durable power of attorney for health care, living wills, and do not resuscitate directives. Also see the list of Kansas Resources for more information.

**References**


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**Kansas Resources**

Elder Law Hotline  
(800) 353-5337  
www.kansaslegalservices.org/Home/PublicWeb/GetHelp

Kansas Department on Aging  
(800) 432-3535  
www.agingkansas.org

Kansas Health Ethics  
(316) 684-1991  
www.kansashealthethics.org

Kansas Legal Services  
(888) 353-5337  
www.kansaslegalservices.org

Life Project  
Helpline: (888) 202-5433  
www.lifeproject.org

**Kansas Resources with Downloadable Forms**

Kansas Bar Association  
(785) 234-5696  
www.ksbar.org or ksbar.lawinfo.com (page with forms)

The University of Kansas Hospital (offers forms in Spanish) www.kumed.com/bodyside.cfm?id=2120

**National Resources**

Caring Connections  
Helpline: (800) 658-8898  
Spanish Helpline: (877) 658-8896  
www.caringinfo.org

National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health: MedlinePlus  

LawHelp.org  
www.lawhelp.org
Legal Disclaimer

Advance Directives in Kansas is designed to acquaint the reader with certain legal information about end-of-life issues. It is not designed as a substitute for legal advice, nor does it tell everything one needs to know about end-of-life issues. Future changes in the law cannot be predicted, and statements in this program are based solely on the laws in force on the date of publication. If readers have specific questions, they should seek professional advice. A resource listing of attorneys by state can be provided by the specific State Bar Association. You can locate your state bar association at http://www.abanet.org/barserv/stlobar.html.

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