

end OF *life* CONSENSUS COALITION

Washington's Online Living Will Registry: Register Now for Peace of Mind



"Will your Living Will be available when it's needed?"

In recent years, the American public has become increasingly aware of the importance of documenting end-of-life wishes. A Living Will or Health Care Directive is a document that specifies our preferences for medical treatment when we are unconscious or otherwise unable to make decisions on our own. Another document, called a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, names a health care agent to ensure that our wishes for medical care are honored. However, these important documents are not effective when they cannot be located by our medical providers or family.

Here in Washington we are fortunate to have an online Living Will Registry where residents can register these forms and two other advance planning documents with the Department of Health (DOH). The Registry allows health care providers to quickly access a patient's documents via a secure website. People who register have the peace of mind that comes from knowing their documents will be available when it really matters.

The Registry website covers why and how to register and provides each of the documents that can be registered. Registration is easy. Fill out a simple registration form, then mail or fax it and your documents to the DOH. The DOH will reply with a written confirmation that includes your unique ID number, a wallet card with instructions about how to use the Registry, and stickers to place on your driver's license and health insurance card. You will also receive an annual notice reminding you to review and update your information.

It is important for adults of all ages to document their end-of-life wishes by making a Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. Discussing your choices with your medical providers, family, partner, or other loved ones is just as important. Then register your documents with the Living Will Registry. It is easy, free, and provides peace of mind.

The New Year is a great time to make a resolution to get your end-of-life affairs in order. For more information or instructions on preparing and registering your advance planning documents, go to the Washington State Living Will Registry website at www.doh.wa.gov/livingwill, or call the DOH's Consumer Hotline toll free, 1-800-525-0127.

Prepared in January 2010 by the Living Will Registry Task Force, a project of the Washington End of Life Consensus Coalition. For more information about Washington's Living Will Registry, contact Iona Stenhouse, (206) 369-0644.