

Selecting Your Health Care Agent

In last month's installment, we talked about the importance of having a validly executed Advance Directive which includes a Living Will and Health Care Power of Attorney.

This month we will guide you in your selection of a health care agent. When you decide to pick someone to speak for you in a medical crisis, in the event you are not able to speak for yourself, these are the questions you should consider in your selection process. Usually it is best to name *one* person or agent to serve at a time, with at least one successor, or back-up person, in case the first person is not available when needed.

Compare up to 3 people. The persons best suited to be your Health Care Agent rate well on these qualifications:

1. Meets the legal criteria in North Carolina for acting as your agent. (This is a MUST! – more on this in next month's installment).
2. Would be willing to speak on your behalf.
3. Would be able to act on your wishes and separate his/her own feelings from yours.
4. Lives close by or could travel to be at your side if needed.
5. Knows you well and understands what's important to you.
6. Is someone you trust with your life.
7. Will talk with you now about sensitive issues and will listen to your wishes.
8. Will likely be available long into the future.
9. Would be able to handle conflicting opinions between family members, friends, and medical personnel.
10. Can be a strong advocate in the face of an unresponsive doctor or institution.

In next month's issue we will discuss who can't be a health care agent, what to do after you pick a health care agent, and how much authority you should give your agent. Until then...be well.

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