

National Healthcare Decisions Day

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Join National Healthcare Decisions Day...Because Your Decisions Matter

Please help us make history, again, on April 16th, our annual National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD). The inaugural event was formally recognized by Congress and numerous state and local governments. The first 10 years of NHDD included participation by over 110 of the most prominent national healthcare, religious, and legal associations and organizations and over 1600 state/local organizations. At every level, the goal of this nationwide initiative is to ensure that all adults with decision-making capacity in America have both the information and the opportunity to communicate and document their future healthcare decisions. The first 10 years' results were impressive—over 3.9 million people obtained resources to make their healthcare decisions known and over 4.7 million facility/organization staff members received NHDD/advance directive information and training.

Each of us can guide our healthcare providers and those important in our lives (a loved one, chosen family, close friend) about what we want. We can't plan for everything but we can talk about what is most important – in our life and in our health care - with those who matter most. NHDD focuses on the importance of conversations and making your wishes known. An advance directive gives you the ability to document the types of healthcare you do and do not want, and to name an “agent” to speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself. As Terri Schiavo's situation vividly revealed, having an advance directive can be valuable for all adults, regardless of current age or health status.

With the Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990, Congress affirmed the right of every citizen to set forth his or her future healthcare wishes in writing with an “advance directive.” In recognition of this, National Healthcare Decisions Day strives to provide much-needed information to the public, empower people to have a say in the care they want, increase education on the benefits of advance care planning (e.g. ability to provide the right care when a person's wishes are known), and improve the ability of healthcare facilities and providers to offer informed and thoughtful guidance about advance healthcare planning to their patients.

Please visit www.NHDD.org for a variety of free information (including free advance directives forms for every state) and tools to assist with thoughtful reflection on healthcare choices and ideas on how to get involved. Additionally, watch for events in your community honoring

National Healthcare Decisions Day. Finally, please share this information with those important in your life and colleagues.

With healthcare, “*your decisions matter*,” however, others need to know your wishes to honor them. Start a conversation today. There are no wrong answers when thinking about healthcare choices, talking about them with those important to you, and completing an advance directive. Please use April 16th to decide, discuss, and document your wishes, whatever they may be.

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