

Fall 2013

KANSAS

SHERIFF

Two New Kansas Jails
Cover Story Page 17

Official publication of the
Kansas Sheriffs' Association

Is An Advanced Directive Right For Me??

Life can change in an instant, was what we learned from the murders of Officer Jeff Atherly and Corporal David Gogian. It is important your family knows what your wishes are if you are unable to communicate with EMTs or hospital staff. Having an advanced directive in place will allow your wishes to be followed without having your family guess what they are.

An advanced directive is an umbrella term that contains three types of documents: a living will,

power of attorney for health care decisions, and a do not resuscitate (DNR) directive. A living will provides an express direction of a patient's wishes regarding certain types of medical treatment in the event of certain circumstances. A power of attorney for health care decision appoints an agent to act on behalf of a principal for the sole purpose of making medical decisions. A DNR prevents any medical procedure to restart breathing or heart functions. A

Continued Next Page

Advanced Directive Right For Me?? Continued

DNR can be executed by an individual or a physician through an order.

It is important for first responders to have a living will and a power of attorney for health care decisions because these documents protect your wishes if you are unable to communicate them. It is very important when choosing who will be your power of attorney to choose one that you can trust. This is the most important decision of your advanced directive planning. Your agent must be a person that has your interest in mind and understands your wishes. Your agent does not have to be a family member but must be a person who understands and is comfortable discussing your wishes. **DO NOT** pick a person because you feel obligated to pick them.

When discussing with your health care agent your wishes, reflect on your values and what treatments you would want to extend life in any particular situation. According to the Mayo Clinic, because you cannot predict every medical situation, you **MUST** discuss the following treatments: Resuscitation, mechanical ventilation, nutritional and hydra-

tion assistance, and dialysis. Resuscitation is restarting the heart after it has stopped beating. Discuss if you want any resuscitation by cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or by electric shock. Mechanical ventilation is when someone takes over breathing if you are unable to. Discuss if and for how long you would like to be mechanically ventilated. Nutritional and hydration assistance is when the nutrients and fluids are supplied to the body through a tube in or to the stomach. Discuss if, when, and for how long you would like to be fed in this manner. Dialysis is when waste is removed from your blood when your kidneys no longer function. Discuss if, when, and for how long you would want to receive this treatment.

Another area you may want to specify in your advanced directive is any decision about organ donation. You may declare in your advanced directive if you would like to donate your organs, eyes, and tissues for transplantation or if you would like to donate your body for scientific research. The Mayo Clinic suggests contacting the medical school closest to your home for details about donating your body for scientific research.

One of the most important steps in planning your advanced directive, is to share it with your fam-

Continued Page 12

ily. Make sure that your family knows what your wishes are, because life is so uncertain. Discussing it with them will come to be a relief because they will not have the burden of trying to guess what treatments you would like.

Once you have filled out the forms for an advanced directive, give copies to your doctor, the person you have chosen to be your health care agent, your family, and keep one accessible. One option is to keep a card in your wallet or purse saying you have a living will and where to find it.

An advanced directive is not set in stone. Please review it as your health or perspectives on life changes. You can always change your mind about your advance directive at any time. You may change your advanced directive by following the steps to create one. Fill out the forms and discuss your changes with family, friends, and your doctor. Then give them the new advanced directive and ask them to destroy the old one. Remember, a living will or medical power of attorney goes into effect only if you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself as determined by your doctors.

Forms for your advanced directive can be found at the following website: <http://kansaslegalservices.org/node/1708>. If you have any questions about your advanced directive or the process of making an advanced directive, please contact an attorney.

Kayla Roehler is a second-year student at Washburn University School of Law. She graduated from KSU with a degree in elementary education and is a native of Cumberland, Wisconsin. After law school she plans to pursue a career in either prosecution or civil litigation.

Note: The forms mentioned are now available on the Kansas Sheriffs' Association web page.

<http://www.kansassheriffs.org/>

Check them out, download them, print them, start the discussion with your significant others.

Be prepared, both professionally and personally.

It's up to you!