What kind of medical care would you want if you were too ill or hurt to express your wishes? Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to convey your decisions about end-of-life care ahead of time. They provide a way for you to communicate your wishes to family, friends and health care professionals, and to avoid confusion later on.

A living will tells how you feel about care intended to sustain life. You can accept or refuse medical care. There are many issues to address, including:

- The use of dialysis and breathing machines
- If you want to be resuscitated if breathing or heartbeat stops
- Tube feeding
- Organ or tissue donation

A durable power of attorney for health care is a document that names your health care proxy. Your proxy is someone you trust to make health decisions if you are unable to do so.

**By creating an advance directive, you are making your preferences about medical care known before you're faced with a serious injury or illness. This will spare your loved ones the stress of making decisions about your care while you are sick. Any person 18 years of age or older can prepare an advance directive.**

## You can write an advance directive in several ways:

- Use a form provided by your doctor.

- Write your wishes down by yourself.

- Call your health department or state department on aging to get a form.

- Call a lawyer.

- Use a computer software package for legal documents.

Advance directives and living wills do not have to be complicated legal documents. They can be short, simple statements about what you want done or not done if you can't speak for yourself. Remember, anything you write by yourself or with a computer software package should follow your state laws. You may also want to have what you have written reviewed by your doctor or a lawyer to make sure your directives are understood exactly as you intended. When you are satisfied with your directives, the orders should be notarized if possible, and copies should be given to your family and your doctor.

For more information, call Mercy's Spiritual Care Department at (712) 279-2003. Or, visit our Website at
www.mercysiouxcity.com
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