

Advancing Advance Directives

We all want to make our own health care decisions. We sign living wills or other advance directives saying what medical treatments we want or do not want in end of life situations. When we sign our advance directives today, how do we know what treatment we will receive 20 or 30 years later when our advance directives are produced for review in our dying hours?

We believe the most important legislation facing the legislature this session is the adoption of House Bill 1182, the Indiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment ("POST"). This law ensures that the medical community will consider and support our end of life medical decisions. The law gives us the right to decide if a doctor should do everything medically possible to keep us alive, do nothing, provide comfort measures only, or anything in between.

The law directs the department of health to develop a POST form that travels with the patient from home, to the hospital, to the nursing home, and back home. The POST form contains physician orders to help ensure our wishes for end of life health care are respected.

The POST form is not an advance directive. The POST form is used to make sure our advance directives are followed.

The POST form should be discussed with your doctor when you are faced with the likelihood of death within a year. The form is specifically meant for seriously ill patients with advanced progressive illness or a terminal illness. When the time comes for the doctor to care instead of cure, the POST form is appropriate.

We all want to die with dignity and have our wishes for a peaceful death honored. This legislation encourages our physician and family to work together to respect our goals for treatment. We urge you to contact your legislator and let them know you support this important law.

The sample POST form and questions and answers about POST are available on our website at www.dhblaw.com.

Keith P. Huffman
Revised January 2013