

# National Health Care Decision Day: Have You Made Your Wishes Known?



## RELATED PRACTICE AREAS

Estate Planning, Administration  
& Wealth Transfer

## RELATED INDUSTRIES

Families, Individuals & Estates

Lauren Keenan

*BKK Wills, Trusts and Estates Newsletter*  
May 2012

April 16, 2012 marked the 5th Annual National Health Care Decision Day. The day is intended to inspire, educate and empower the public and providers about the importance of advance care planning. The purpose of the day is to encourage people to start thinking about their health care decisions before they become ill or incapacitated and can no longer speak for themselves and to put those decisions in writing.

There are two important legal documents that address health care wishes: advance medical directive (or power of attorney, as it is often referred) and a living will. These documents may be merged into one single document.

An Advance Medical Directive serves to appoint an agent to make decisions on your behalf if it is determined by a health care professional that you are no longer capable of making decisions for yourself. This document also includes guidance to your agent regarding the type of care you want to receive.

A living will addresses end of life decisions more specifically, including whether or not you want your life to be artificially extended if a physician has determined that death is imminent.

Both documents are relatively inexpensive to have prepared. Once drafted, you should give these documents to your primary care physician and tell relatives and friends that you want them to honor your wishes when the time comes that you cannot make your own health care decisions. Having your wishes in writing should offer peace of mind, knowing that your health care decisions will continue to be made in keeping with your own beliefs and preferences.