

In Case of Emergency

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“People don’t plan to fail; they just fail to plan.”

If you were taken to a hospital, unconscious, who would the doctors call to make important decisions? Suppose they can’t reach that person? Or, suppose this happened to one of your children; how would the hospital know how to reach you? Suppose your adult child was in an accident. You called the hospital, but what would the hospital staff tell you? Do you know? You should.



Here are a few stories you can tell over your next family dinner to lighten the mood:

“Bob was injured in a car accident and remained in a coma for 13 months. When he regained consciousness, he remained incompetent and was kept alive with a feeding tube and other medical technologies. His wife asked the hospital to remove the artificial means of support, believing Bob would NOT want to be kept alive with such treatments. But his mother strongly disagreed, claiming her son should be kept alive in case medical science advanced enough to restore him to full life.

The two no longer speak to each other nor even enter the same room. The women’s attorneys happily engage in arguing the case before the state court.”

- Did Bob appoint a representative to speak on his behalf? Had Bob executed a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, his appointed

representative would make the decision and avoid the stress and expense of this dispute.

- Did Bob execute a Living Will? If so, then the ultimate life and death decisions would be his and not placed on a loved one to decide.

Or this one:

“Tom and Marie live in New Jersey; their only daughter, Sonia, lives in New York, hoping to become a waitress while taking small parts in off-Broadway productions. Early in December, Sonia’s roommate calls frantically saying there had been an accident during rehearsal and their daughter was taken to Mt. Sinai Hospital. Marie hangs up the phone and calls the hospital. She gets patched through to the nurse on duty who says, “I am terribly sorry, but I cannot release any information. I am not permitted to confirm whether we have someone here by that name.”

- Did Tom and Marie raise the question with Sonia, when she was home for Thanksgiving, about naming them in her Advanced Medical Directives?
- Do they have a copy of these forms?
- Does Sonia carry anything identifying how to reach her parents *In Case of Emergency* (ICE)?

Glossary

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care:

- Authorizes someone to make medical decisions on your behalf;
- Allows for evaluation of specific proposed treatments;
- Tells medical authorities who to contact and who you have granted access to information.

A Living Will

- Shares your decision whether to decline medical treatments that might prolong life, but which would not restore to active or conscious living.
- Will relieve your loved ones of having to make that decision;
- Protects medical personnel from bearing the legal consequences of a decision that you would have wanted anyway.

Conclusion

In Case of Emergency (ICE): Find a way to keep these important documents and contact information on you and your loved ones at all times. Storing these documents in a safety deposit box or in a shoebox at home is no better than not having one at all. You need to grant emergency personnel access to these documents even when you may be unconscious.