

## *The Importance of Advance Care Planning*

During any hospital stay you have the right to choose the treatment that is best for you. One way this is assured is with the use of legal documents called Advance Directives which allow you to:

- state your choices about medical treatments;
- appoint someone to make treatment decisions for you if you are unable to do so yourself.

If needed, an advance directive offers guidance to families, health care agents and medical staff about appropriate care for you. Wisconsin law recognizes two types of advance directives:

- A Power of Attorney for Health Care;
- A Declaration to Physicians (Living Will).

### **Power of Attorney for Health Care:**

Is a legal document which allows you to appoint another person to make medical decisions for you if you should become unable to make those decisions for yourself. You should select a person you trust who can support your wishes regardless of their own values and beliefs.

An advance directive goes into effect when two physicians or a physician and a psychologist, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant have decided that you are unable to make medical treatment decisions. At which point they sign a statement of incapacity. This document can be reversed when you regain your decision-making ability.

### **Declaration to Physicians (Living Will):**

A living will (called a “Declaration to Physicians” in Wisconsin) is a document which focuses on end-of-life. It tells your physician or other healthcare providers whether or not you want life-sustaining treatments or procedures administered to you if you are in a terminal condition or a persistent vegetative state. It is called a “living will” because it takes effect while you are living. The document goes into effect the same way the Power of Attorney for Health Care does and only when you are in a terminal condition or a persistent vegetative state.

### **If you do not have an Advance Directive:**

Wisconsin Law does not recognize next-of-kin status. A person who does not have an advance directive and is unable to understand or communicate may have problems arise. If there are any family conflicts or disagreements with plans of care or placement options, it may become necessary to have the Courts appoint a legal guardian to make decisions for you. This can be an expensive and disruptive process.

If you need professional assistance with this conversation and/or with filling out the document, please feel free to contact any organization listed below:

- **Froedtert South Spiritual Care Department:** Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. call 262-656-3523 and a chaplain will be able to assist you.
- **Aging and Disability Resource Center:** Wednesday mornings, 9:00 a.m. - Noon. 8600 Sheridan Road, Kenosha, WI 53143 (Entrance D), call to register 262-605-6365.
- **Hospice Alliance:** Appointments are available for the public. To schedule, call 262-652-4400, the receptionist will take your information and one of the Social Workers will assist.