

Advance Directives: Securing Your Health Care Future

July 23 2012 8:43 AM

ALTON, IL -- Advance directives are not just for older adults. When you or a loved one are faced with a serious illness or accident, it's important that you have such legal documents that describe your preferences regarding your health care treatment.

“Advance Directives: Securing Your Healthcare Future,” a program co-sponsored by OASIS and Alton Memorial Hospital, will be held from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 7, in the hospital’s Cafeteria Meeting Rooms. A panel of professionals will discuss which documents you need and why they are important from both a financial and legal perspective. To register for this free program, call 800-392-0936.

Unexpected end-of-life situations can happen at any age, so it's important for all adults to have advance directives. They can include a living will and a medical power of attorney. A “living will” only applies if you have a terminal condition and describes your end-of-life wishes, whereas a power of attorney allows you to select a family member or friend -- designated as an agent -- as your medical decision maker.

Your agent will only make decisions on your behalf when you are unable to do so, for example, if you are unconscious after a car accident. Your advance directives should be in writing. Each state has its own laws regarding advance directives. Although it isn't required, you may want to consult an attorney about this process.

Injury, illness and death aren't easy subjects to talk about, but by planning ahead you can ensure that you receive the type of medical care you want. You also relieve your family

of the burden of trying to guess what you'd want done. Be sure to discuss your wishes with your loved ones. Let them know you're creating advance directives and explain your feelings about medical care and what you'd want done in specific instances.