



For Immediate Release

Press Contact: Daniella Elghanayan/Christopher Davis
805/687-3322

Despite the Rhetoric in the Healthcare Debate, End of Life Planning is a Powerful Gift for Your Loved Ones

At Hospice of Santa Barbara, Services are Free; No Health Insurance Needed

August 31, 2009, Santa Barbara, CA--There has been much discussion about issues surrounding End of Life Planning as it relates to the current health care debate in Washington, D.C., and around the country. While Hospice of Santa Barbara does not take specific political stands, the organization wants to ensure that the Santa Barbara Community understands the importance of End of Life Planning and what it really is.

“End of Life Planning is a bit of a misnomer because the actual planning can happen at any point during our life, not just at the end of it,” said Steve Jacobsen, Executive Director of Hospice of Santa Barbara. “In other words, we can all make these decisions today without having to wait until we are in a crisis, terminally ill or in our later years. The “planning” simply relates to the choices we make related to completing our lives in a way that reflects our values. It’s a thoughtful, responsible, and loving act that can reduce unnecessary anguish for people you love.”

End of Life planning includes familiar terms such as wills, durable powers of attorney, end of life medical decisions, advance directives, inheritances and finances. Even the choice between burial and cremation is something that should be determined ahead of time. It is important for all of us to make these decisions for ourselves and with our families to avoid future confusion, choices being made that do not align with our ethical or religious beliefs, loss of money, and family disagreements.

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPAHC), for example, is one kind of advanced directive that appoints someone for you to make health care decisions. It becomes active if you are unconscious or unable to make medical decisions.

The Living Will is another kind end of life document that specifies what types of medical treatment are desired.

Advanced estate and financial planning is critical because it allows you to make the best decisions about inheritance, life insurance, personal property/effects, etc. Make sure you have a valid, up-to-date *will*, or *trust documents* if desired or needed.

Death is a painful time for loved ones and alleviating them of having to make difficult decisions in their grief is a loving gift. Putting your End of Life wishes down in writing is crucial. You and your loved ones will be glad you did.

For more information, guidance, or a personal end of life planning guide, contact Hospice of Santa Barbara at (805) 563-8820 or online at www.hospiceofsantabarbara.org.

Fortunately, for those of us in the Santa Barbara area, Hospice of Santa Barbara services are free so the lack of comprehensive health insurance does not have to impede your planning.

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