

# Living Wills

A living will is an expression of your wishes regarding your end-of-life decisions. If you do not want to be kept alive artificially, in the event you are in a terminal condition and unable to give directions regarding the use of artificial, life-sustaining procedures, you should sign a living will making your wishes known. For a doctor to withhold or withdraw artificial, life-sustaining treatment, there must be clear and convincing evidence that those are the patient's wishes. When you do not have a living will, you will be kept alive artificially or your loved ones will be forced to make decisions about your end-of-life care without your input.

A living will can be tailored to suit your wishes. For example, some may not want their lives prolonged in any way should they be terminally ill, while others may want any and all medical interventions used to keep them alive. Still others may wish to decline all life-prolonging treatment with the exception of food and water.

Regardless of your decision, it is critical that you discuss your wishes with your family members and loved ones. While a living will is clear and convincing evidence of a person's wishes, from a practical standpoint, it is possible that in an end-of-life situation, the document's strength could be diminished if parents, children, or spouses claim the living will does not reflect their loved one's wishes. This could also happen if close family members simply do not agree with each other on whether the living will reflects their loved one's wishes.

The key is to act now by contacting an elder law attorney to discuss questions you have about living wills. Once you have been educated about your options and talked to your physician, you can make the decision that is right for you. And once your decision is made, and you have signed a living will, you can take the next step of discussing your wishes with your family. Good elder law attorneys who take a holistic approach to serving their clients can help you with this part of the process as well.

Pennsylvania residents should call Steinbacher, Sholder & Stahl at 570-322-2077 to talk to them about establishing a living will.



413 Washington Blvd., Williamsport, PA 17701

P: 570-322-2077 | 1-800-351-8334 | F: 570-322-2119

[sss@ssselderlaw.com](mailto:sss@ssselderlaw.com) | [www.ssselderlaw.com](http://www.ssselderlaw.com)