

Press Release



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State Bar of Wisconsin offers free health care planning guide for a limited time

MADISON, Wis. (April 16, 2025) -- Wisconsin residents can access a free resource to help them prepare for future health care decisions, thanks to the State Bar of Wisconsin.

The State Bar is offering a **free PDF download** of its popular publication, *A Gift to Your Family: Planning Ahead for Future Health Needs*, at wisbar.org/healthcare. The guide, available through April 25, 2025, helps individuals document their wishes in the event of a serious illness or medical emergency—when they may be unable to speak for themselves.

Under Wisconsin law, adults have the right to make decisions about their medical care, including the right to accept or refuse treatment, appoint someone to make decisions for them, and become an organ or tissue donor. **But next of kin—spouses, parents, adult children—do not automatically have the legal authority to make health care decisions** unless the individual has a Power of Attorney for Health Care (POAHC).

“Without it, your family can be forced into costly and time-consuming guardianship procedures just to gain control over a loved one’s medical care,” said Jon Fischer, an elder law attorney with McCarty Law and secretary of the State Bar’s Elder Law and Special Needs Section.

“The court process can be avoided in most cases if you do advance care planning,” added Ben Adams, retired attorney and advisor to the section.

The State Bar offers the free PDF each year in recognition of **Healthcare Decisions Week in Wisconsin** (April 14–20, 2025), as proclaimed by Gov. Tony Evers, and **National Healthcare Decisions Day** on April 16. The initiative encourages individuals to talk to loved ones and take steps to ensure their health care preferences are known and respected.

The 24-page guide includes practical information on powers of attorney, living wills, organ and tissue donation, and state-approved forms to make it easier for individuals to document their choices. Print copies are available year-round for purchase: \$4 for State Bar members and \$5 for nonmembers. Minnesota and Illinois versions are also available.

To download the free guide or order print copies, visit wisbar.org/healthcare.

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Photo attached: *A Gift to Your Family: Planning Ahead for Future Health Needs*

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