



“Living Wills: Jewish End of Life Decision Making”

A **Living Will** (or advance directive or health care directive) is a document that allows a person to make his or her wishes known concerning life prolonging treatments and end of life care.

**Massachusetts is one of three states that does not have a law recognizing or governing living wills (Michigan and New York are the others,) however a living will is still useful to help guide your Health Care Proxy in making your medical decisions.

A **Health Care Proxy** is an agent you appoint to make your medical decisions if you are unable to do so. Your agent is only empowered to make decisions when your doctor determines that you are no longer able to make your own health care decisions. Your doctor must fill out a form and place it in your chart to invoke the health care proxy. The form states the nature, extent, and expected duration of your incapacity.

Terefah – one who has a terminal disease, with a life expectancy of 12 months. This person is to be medically treated just as any other patient would be.

Chayei Shaah – one who will live only a brief period unless there is medical intervention. One may choose risky medical treatment even if there is only a slim chance of a cure. (Some say there has to be a risk of less than 50% that the procedure will lead to death rather than to healing.)

Goses – a person who will die in the next three days. This person should not be disturbed, but kept comfortable. Impediments to death may be removed.

Resources:

To get a Massachusetts Health Care Proxy Form:

<http://www.massmed.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&CONTENTID=2570&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>

To order “Five Wishes”: <http://www.agingwithdignity.org/>

To get “The Halachic Living Will” developed and published by Agudath Israel of America: <http://www.jlaw.com/Forms/>

To get “Jewish Medical Directives for Health Care” The Rabbinical Assembly:
www.rabbinicalassembly.org/docs/medical%20directives.pdf

To get the Advance Directive/Health Care Proxy forms from “A Time To Prepare” (URJ):
<http://huc.edu/kalsman/articles/URJ,%20Jewish%20Family%20Concerns%20Advance%20Directive.pdf>

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