

What is the WILL TO LIVE?

Our Gift for You and Your Loved Ones

The WILL TO LIVE is a legal document that you can sign which:

- Is a legally binding pro-life alternative to the traditional Living Wills
- Names someone to make health care decisions for you (your "health care agent") if you develop a condition that makes it impossible for you to speak for yourself (become "incompetent"), and
- Makes clear (in the form of written instructions to your health care agent) what medical treatment you would want if you can no longer speak for yourself

How does the WILL TO LIVE protect your life and the lives of your family members?
When you are unable to speak for yourself the WILL TO LIVE:

- Names someone you trust to safeguard your life when you cannot speak for yourself as your "health care agent"
- Names backup agents if your first choice can't serve
- Describes the treatment you do and do not want to guide your health care agent and physicians
- Protects your family and health care agent from pressure from health care providers and others by allowing them to prove what you really did want
- Relieves the agony of decision making for them by making your wishes clear

How does the WILL to LIVE differ from a LIVING WILL?

If you are someone who doesn't want medical technology to prolong your last hours, **but who also doesn't want to be starved or allowed to die just because you have a disability**, your wishes will be far more likely to be respected if you sign a properly prepared Will to Live than if you sign a Living Will.

When living will bills were first proposed in the 1970's and 1980's, the general consensus and the normal practice of medicine favored life. Food and fluids were almost always provided patients as a matter of course, and life-saving medical treatment was normally provided unless patients were terminally ill and in the final stage of the dying process.

Times have long since changed. Step by step, the vague language in most living will statutes was amended to make explicit their authorization of denial of life-saving procedures in more and more instances. Food and water was added to medical treatment. Denial of treatment was authorized not only for "terminal illness" (itself often very broadly defined) but also for "irreversible conditions" and other euphemisms for permanent disabilities. Most dangerous of all, court after court and then state legislature after state legislature adopted rules allowing denial of treatment and then food and water to older people and people with disabilities who had never signed living wills or otherwise rejected life-saving measures.

Just as pro-life groups predicted, the adoption of living will legislation helped achieve a sea change in public opinion—and in the practices of the medical profession. We now see open advocacy—and implementation—of both direct killing and involuntary denial of lifesaving treatment against the express desires of the patient. Especially among health care providers, but also among many in the general public, the "quality of life" ethic has largely replaced the "equality of life" one.

The result is that we can no longer safely count on a general respect for life to protect patients, or leave matters to be worked out informally among doctors, patients and their families. The hard reality is that the presumption has now shifted to favor death, not life, for people with significant disabilities. Because these disabilities can happen to any one of us, our relatives, or our friends, it is now essential affirmatively to set down in writing that should we become disabled, we do want the presumption to be for life.

Failure to sign a Will to Live is now likely to leave you or your loved ones unprotected, at the mercy of health care providers and courts dominated by those with very different values from a universal respect for human life.

[Benefits of the WILL to LIVE versus LIVING WILL](#)

[Download the Maryland State Will to Live](#)