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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**LOCAL ATTORNEYS OFFER FREE ASSISTANCE ON HOW TO EXECUTE ADVANCE HEALTHCARE DIRECTIVES**

El Paso County Attorney's Office, the University Medical Center of El Paso, and the El Paso County Medical Society, along with other community organizations, will celebrate National Healthcare Decisions Day (April 16) with two public events highlighting the importance of advance healthcare decision-making.

On April 13 and 14, 2012, volunteers from our organizations will be providing information and forms to individuals interested in talking to family, friends and healthcare providers about their medical wishes. During the events licensed attorneys will provide free assistance on how to execute advance directives (Medical Power of Attorney and Medical or "living" Wills).

The kick-off event is scheduled for **Friday April 13, 2012** at **9:30 a.m.** at the lobby of the **University Medical Center, at 4815 Alameda**. Following the kick-off, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., local attorneys will be offering free assistance regarding advance care planning and advance directive forms.

The second event will be held on **Saturday April 14, 2012** at **Bassett Place Mall, 6101 Gateway Blvd. West**, also from **10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.** Again, local attorneys will be offering free assistance regarding advance care planning and advance directive forms.

Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to convey your decisions about end-of-life care ahead of time. They provide a way for you to communicate your wishes to family, friends and health care professionals, and to avoid confusion later on.

**A Directive to Physicians or Living Will** tells how you feel about care intended to sustain life. You can accept or refuse medical care. There are many issues to address, including:

- The use of dialysis and breathing machines
- If you want to be resuscitated if breathing or heartbeat stops
- Tube feeding
- Organ or tissue donation
- Blood transfusions

**A Medical Power of Attorney** is a document that names your health care proxy. Your proxy is someone you trust to make health decisions if you are unable to do so.

El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal explained that living wills, and medical powers of attorney help families avoid painful decisions during very difficult times.

“The absence of written directives may prolong invasive and often painful but ultimately fruitless therapies, or deny a patient treatment that could provide comfort,” Bernal said.

“Every year our office promotes the use of advance directives with the expectation that fewer families and healthcare providers will have to struggle with making difficult healthcare decisions without any input from the patient. We also want healthcare providers and facilities to be better prepared to honor patient wishes when he or she becomes incapacitated,” Bernal concluded.

Individuals interested in getting the Directive to Physicians and Medical Power of Attorney forms can download them by visiting the County Attorney’s web page at [www.epcounty.com/ca](http://www.epcounty.com/ca).

For more information about National Healthcare Decision Day, please visit [www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org](http://www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org).

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