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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL ATTORNEYS OFFER FREE ASSISTANCE TO EXECUTE ADVANCE HEALTHCARE DIRECTIVES (MEDICAL WILLS)

El Paso County Attorney's Office and the University Medical Center of El Paso, 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 Tuesday April 16 and on Saturday April 20, 2013, 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 **Tuesday April 16, 2013** at **9:30 a.m.** in the lobby of the **University Medical Center, at 4815 Alameda.** Following the kick-off, **from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 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 20, 2013** from **10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.** at **Bassett Place Mall, 6101 Gateway Blvd. West.** 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 are two very important tools that allow an individual to participate in future medical care decisions even if they become incapacitated.

“These legal documents protect your right as a patient to accept or decline life-saving medical care even when you cannot speak for yourself. Although these documents are appropriate for end-of-life scenarios, we recommend that every adult have an advanced directive,” Bernal said.

“Every year our office promotes the use of advance directives because we want fewer families struggling with making difficult medical decisions in the emergency room when they are suffering from the emotional stress of someone’s illness,” 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. The forms are available in both English and Spanish.

For more information about National Healthcare Decision Day, please visit www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org.

WHO: Assistant County Attorney Edward Sosa

WHAT: 2013 National Healthcare Decisions Day Press Conference

WHEN: Tuesday April 16, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.

WHERE: University Medical Center, 4815 Alameda

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