

TEXASLIVINGWILL.ORG
Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics
UT Health Science Center San Antonio

On average, only 21 to 33 percent of adults have completed advance directive documents. Only 77 percent of people have heard of advance directives and fewer than 12 percent have discussed an advance directive with their physician when completing it. Advance directives are legal documents that designate a medical power of attorney and provide instructions to the physician for the patient's care when the patient is no longer able to make or express his or her health care wishes. However, ever since the 1995 SUPPORT Study, we have realized that as noble in purpose as advance directives are, that often they fall short of expectations. Many times surrogate decision makers and physicians ignore them. The documents can be confusing, especially in a state like Texas that does not dictate the format of the advance directive. Many people do not realize that an attorney is not needed to complete a directive. And most importantly, most people cannot find a directive when it is needed.

We are creating an on-line, advance directive completion website. Using encrypted, password protection, the

The screenshot shows the homepage of TexasLivingWill.org. At the top, there is a navigation bar with four tabs: "Start Your Advance Directive", "How to Use This Site", "Forms/Downloads", and "Advance Care Planning". Below the navigation bar, there is a "Where to Start" sidebar with links for "How To Get Started", "What is a living will?", "Should I have an advance directive?", "Can I change my advance directive?", "FAQs", "Contact Us", "Helpful Links", and "Spanish - Español". The main content area features a "Welcome, Guest" message with a "[Create Account]" link and a "FONT SIZE" selector. The central heading is "Living Will Online Completion for Texans", followed by a sub-heading "This Website will guide you through the process of completing your Advance Directive. To begin, with your Advance Directive, please select a language below." There are two language selection boxes: "English-Inglés" and "Spanish-Español". Each box contains instructions and a "Start" or "Iniciar" button. The "English-Inglés" box includes a checkbox for "I am over 18 years of age". The "Spanish-Español" box includes a checkbox for "Soy más de 18 años mayores de edad". At the bottom, there is a "Returning User Login" section with fields for "Username:" and "Password:", a "Forgot your password?" link, a "Remember Me" checkbox, and a "Sign In" button. The footer contains the text "SPONSORED BY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER THE CENTER FOR MEDICAL HUMANITIES & ETHICS www.texashumanities.org" and a copyright notice "©2009 TexasLivingWill.org All rights reserved. Disclaimer - Privacy Policy".

website will enable a user to complete an interview regarding his or her end of life care wishes. The program would then compile these wishes and print out a set of completed State of Texas advance directive documents (directive to the physician and family, medical power of attorney, out-of-hospital do not resuscitate order, and declaration for mental health treatment). Using an interview process similar to that found for tax software, the program asks a series of questions regarding a person's end of life desires. At the end of the interview, one can print out the forms, save them as PDFs, or send them to an online repository.

Making these documents easier to access and available to complete in the privacy of one's own home will encourage their completion and increase their use. The Texas version is more essential because there are many more options for completing an advance directive and this program will reduce the confusion that often ensues. In short, TEXASLIVINGWILL.ORG will help Texans to exercise control over their end of life choices and remove the burdens on a family of having to make a choice for a dying loved one. This program is geared toward increasing decision-making control, ease of decision-making, and improving the end of life experience for all Texans.

Expected launch date is May 15, 2009

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