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Who will make your health care decisions should you be unable to do so, how will you ensure your wishes are carried out according to *Halacha*? Having a *Halachic* Health Care Proxy/ "Living Will" ensures health care wishes are carried out to your exact specifications by someone you trust.

A Health Care Proxy allows you to appoint someone you trust (your "agent" or "proxy") to make health care decisions on your behalf when it is medically determined that you are incapable of making those decisions for yourself, whether your situation is temporary (such as under general anesthesia) or more permanent. It is important to note that a *Halachic* Health Care Proxy/"Living Will" is not limited in use to cases of terminal illness and it ceases to be in effect when it is medically determined that an individual is capable of making decisions once again.

A "Living Will" is a legal document which states, in advance, your desires about medical treatment should you subsequently become incapable of expressing those desires yourself. It can provide specific instructions about what treatment you would or would not want under a given circumstance. Of course, you cannot predict the nature of all future illnesses, therefore, the "Living Will" should also provide your health care providers with general guidelines, such as your desire that any treatment you receive be in conformity with *Halacha*, Orthodox Jewish Law. State law dictates whether it can be part of your Health Care Proxy or must be a separate document. In some states, a "Living Will" is in a legislatively-approved format that can be completed as you wish. Its enforceability comes from both state and Federal statutes and case law.

The court cases that have addressed "Living Wills," or, more often, the lack of them, have a common theme: how shall a health care provider proceed with the medical treatment of an incapacitated patient if there is no evidence of his or her wishes? A "Living Will" provides that evidence.

Halachic Health Care Proxy documents have been prepared for a number of states by the Agudath Israel. For states not provided a document, those requesting a *Halachic* Living Will should use the "Sample General *Halachic* Living Will" document. Please note that if using the Sample document, one needs to consult with a local estates and trusts attorney to ensure that the text conforms to that state's health care proxy laws.

We recommend that everyone register their *Halachic* Living Wills with a national registry. Agudath Israel has made an arrangement with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) to register *Halachic* Living Wills with the U.S. Living Will Registry® at no charge. Please see the "registry letter" and "registry form" under "Register Your *Halachic* Living Will with the U.S. Living Will Registry". This service is available to residents of all 50 states.