Being Proactive Concerning the End of Your Life

Think about your values and wishes while you are still healthy:

- What would you want for yourself if you were to become disabled?
- What things give meaning and value to your life?
- Are there some things you hope would NEVER be done to you?
- Who do you trust enough to discuss your wishes about future care? Can that person stand up for what you want and be your advocate in a crisis?

Execute a medical power of attorney and discuss your wishes with the persons you appoint as your agent and alternate.

- Write out your wishes and have ongoing conversations as your life situation changes.
- Be sure your physician has a copy of your health care directives (medical power of attorney and directive to physicians if you decide to execute one).
- Be sure your physician knows who you have appointed to be your decision maker in case you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself and invite that person to visits with your doctor if you are having significant health issues.

Helping your family understand your wishes and values will make things easier for them when you near the end of your life.

- Texas law directs surrogate decision makers to honor the patient's wishes if known.
- It is easier to determine what you would have wanted if you have conversations ahead of time and also leave some written instructions. These written instructions are called advisory directives and do not have the same force in law as statutory directives—but they do flesh out what you meant when you filled out statutory documents.
- Some advisory documents you might consider are Five Wishes, Caring Conversations, and Respecting Choices materials.
- Studies have shown that when families have the guidance of such documents or conversations, the end of life of a loved one is much less stressful and the family is more likely to feel comfortable following their loved ones wishes for comfort at the end of life.