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HONORING CHOICES® TENNESSEE URGES TENNESSEANS TO SHARE HEALTH CARE DECISIONS

National Healthcare Decisions Week is April 16 - 22, 2018

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Have you thought about the health care you would want if you could not make decisions or communicate yourself? If so, have you shared your choices with your loved ones and health care providers? Governor Bill Haslam has declared April 16, 2018 **Healthcare Decisions Day** in Tennessee, urging Tennesseans to think about their choices and share them with others by completing an advanced directive. The Tennessee Department of Health is joining partners in Honoring Choices® Tennessee to educate Tennesseans about the benefits of executing an advance directive.

“Advance health care planning has always been important, but these critical conversations can be very hard to have and words unspoken can mean wishes unknown,” said TDH Commissioner John Dreyzehner, MD, MPH. “Healthcare Decisions Day provides an opportunity to empower the difficult but important conversations that can improve our approach to advanced care and end-of-life planning and ensure all of us have the conversations and their written record so we can assure we and our loved ones receive care that honors our values and wishes.”

TDH is a partner in Honoring Choices® Tennessee and the AdvanceDirectivesTN initiative to increase the number of Tennesseans who have an advance directive for health care. An advance directive is a document that tells family members and care providers a patient’s preferences for care if they are ever in a position where they cannot make decisions and communicate for themselves.

“This is all about putting important medical decisions into the hands of our patients and to encourage family discussions around very difficult end of life care. People need to make these decisions while they are still physically and mentally able so we can help honor those wishes. Our goal with AdvanceDirectivesTN is to encourage Tennesseans to start the conversation right now about advance care planning with their health care providers, family members and loved ones, and to complete an advance directive,” said Tennessee Hospital Association CEO Craig A. Becker. “We are working to educate Tennessee health care workers about the benefits of advance directives so they can then educate patients and their families about this important step.”

A pilot project is underway in Chattanooga in which ten CVS pharmacies will provide information to customers about advance directives. Honoring Choices Tennessee® is working to get other organizations to include advance directives in employee fairs, community health fairs and other company and community activities.

Organizing members of Honoring Choices® Tennessee are the Tennessee Hospital Association, Tennessee Nurses Association, Tennessee Medical Association, Tennessee Health Care Association, Tennessee Hospice Organization, Tennessee End of Life Partnership, Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disabilities, Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Healthy Shelby, Hospice of Chattanooga, Mountain States Health Alliance, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, QSource and AARP.

The mission of the Advance Directive Coalition is to give Tennesseans the opportunity to have conversations with family, friends and health care providers about their choices for care at the end of life; to complete an advance directive memorializing their choices; and to live with the knowledge and freedom that they have expressed their choices and that their choices regarding care will be honored. Research conducted by Honoring Choices Tennessee® found fewer than one-third of adult Tennesseans had executed an advance directive in 2016.

Honoring Choices® Tennessee is affiliated with the Honoring Choices® National Network. Learn more and find resources including step-by-step instructions on how to create your advance directive at www.advancedirectivesTN.org.

National Healthcare Decisions Day is an annual event to inspire, educate and empower the public and providers about the importance of advance health care planning, and will be observed April 16 – 22, 2018. NHDD encourages patients to express their wishes regarding health care and for providers and facilities to respect those wishes, whatever they may be. [This video](#) explains why advance care planning is important for everyone. Learn more at www.nhdd.org.

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. TDH has facilities in all 95 counties and provides direct services for more than one in five Tennesseans annually as well as indirect services for everyone in the state, including emergency response to health threats, licensure of health professionals, regulation of health care facilities and inspection of food service establishments. Learn more about TDH services and programs at www.tn.gov/health.

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