



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 8, 2014

CATHOLIC BISHOPS REVISE ADVANCE CARE PLANNING FORMS

Earlier this year, the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin published a form aimed at helping individuals convey their desires regarding advance care planning in a manner that aligns with Catholic principles. The form, which was published in one version for those who are Catholic and in another version for those who are not, is designed as an Addendum to the State of Wisconsin's Power of Attorney for Health Care (POAHC) document.

The newly revised edition of the form provides greater clarity for users regarding the Church's teaching on nutrition and hydration. Section II of the Addendum is entitled "DESIRES, PROVISIONS AND LIMITATIONS FOR MY HEALTH CARE" and details the principles, concerns, and considerations that a health care agent should employ when making a decision for the person who completed the form. Item 3 of this section deals explicitly with the provision of nutrition and hydration and was altered in the revised form to provide a more comprehensive explanation of when the provision of nutrition and hydration is morally obligatory.

"The Conference had received inquiries regarding when and how certain factors, such as prognosis, physical comfort, and financial burden, should be considered when making decisions regarding the provision of artificial nutrition and hydration," explained Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) Executive Director John Huebscher. "The revised language better informs the health care agent of how to assess these considerations and provides an instructive example. It helps those using the form to better understand the nuances of the decision-making process when dealing with the provision of nutrition and hydration."

While the original Addendum is in harmony with Church teaching, individuals are encouraged to use the revised form. If an individual has already completed the Addendum, he or she may consider completing the revised form in its place, or at a minimum, provide further clarification to their health care agent and others by supplying them with the language in Section II, Item 3 of the revised form.

A POAHC is an advance directive, which is a legal document through which an individual declares the kind of care that he or she would want if unable to participate in decision making. The POAHC enables a person to designate an agent to make health care decisions if the person is ever incapacitated. When used in conjunction with a valid Wisconsin POAHC, the Addendum communicates a person's desires, consistent with Catholic teaching, on decisions regarding nutrition and hydration, pain management, and other health care matters.

In addition to completing these documents, the bishops continue to stress the need for individuals to pray for guidance, reflect on the principles of faith, and discuss their desires honestly and openly with loved ones. Individuals should also discuss their advance care planning wishes with their health care providers.

The revised POAHC Addenda are available at no cost on the WCC's website, www.wisconsincatholic.org, along with a question and answers document. For further information on these publications, contact the WCC at 608-257-0004 or office@wisconsincatholic.org.

The State of Wisconsin POAHC document is available free of charge from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services at <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives/Index.htm>. To obtain the form by mail, send a request for the document along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to Power of Attorney, Division of Public Health, PO Box 2659, Madison, WI 53701-2659.

-30-

For further information, contact John Huebscher or Kim Wadas at 608-257-0004.