

Remembering Terry Shiavo: How Two Simple Documents Can Protect You From Unwanted Medical Intrusions in Texas

Last week, the nation stopped to remember Terry Shiavo, a 41-year-old woman who was removed from her feeding tube and tragically left to die against the wishes of her family and friends.

Shiavo, who was in a permanent vegetative state after suffering heart failure in 1990, did not have advanced health care directives allowing her parents to intervene medically on her behalf. Sadly, her estranged husband and the U.S. Court system made the final decision to remove Shiavo from her tube in which she ultimately starved to death over a two-week period.

Sadly, very few lessons were learned by Shiavo's high profile death, as many Texans are still without necessary medical directives which state their end-of-life wishes and who can legally intervene on their behalf.

As a **Houston estate planning lawyer** specializing in medical directives and living wills, I deal with the unfortunate consequences of this every day in my practice.

Many times families come to me after a loved one is incapacitated or in a vegetative state following an accident. By the time they get to my office, the family is torn apart and battling over issues such as life support, long-term care, what he or she "would have wanted" if they could speak, how to access the injured's finances to pay for their expensive treatments....and the list goes on.

And of course it breaks my heart to tell these families that their options are now very limited because the injured party did not properly protect themselves or document their wishes in the event of an accident (and I'm not talking about documenting with a will either...a will does not help your family if you don't actually die).

But the good news is that every Texan over 18 years of age can protect themselves from such unwanted intrusions into their medical care (whether that be from family members or the courts) with two simple documents:

- **A medical power of attorney**—which gives the appointed guardian of *your choice* permission to make medical decisions on your behalf; and
- **A directive to physicians** – which allows you to instruct physicians not to use artificial life-saving methods if you are severely injured in an accident.

If you haven't already executed these directives and would like to properly document your end-of-life wishes once and for all, please call our office to talk about setting up advanced medical directives and a **medical power of attorney in Houston, TX**.

These planning sessions typically cost \$750, but if you mention this article when you call, we'll waive the fee, as you've already taken a big step in the right direction of educating yourself on proper end-of-life care.

So don't wait—call me, your personal **Houston will and trust lawyer** Kim Hegwood at (281) 218-0880 to get started.

About Kim Hegwood, Esq. | Texas Estate Planning Lawyer

Houston Estate Planning Attorney Kimberly Hegwood's law career has always been influenced and guided by her family life. The mother of three began her own practice in part to be available for her children when they were young and to provide a needed service to her community. Family law was her initial focus and as her experience with the needs of her clients' extended families and her own aging grandparents, it became clear to her that there was a need for elder law, estate planning and probate to be added to her practice.

Kim has extensive experience with the complexities of family law cases, including adoption, child protection, divorce and custody cases, as well as probate, estate planning, and elder law and she embraced the opportunity to make the focus of her practice more serviceable to the long term needs of the families she is representing. She derives particular satisfaction from creating more comprehensive family services that offer more than just the traditional legal counseling.