

The facts about HCPOA

by Holly Reynolds, MS

Do you want to make sure that decisions about your future healthcare will be made according to your desires?

Are you looking for a way to ensure that your wishes are carried out even if you are unable to voice your opinion?

Having a power of attorney for health care (HCPOA) is a great way to address those concerns and ensure your healthcare future.

Filing a request for a HCPOA allows you to name two people to make healthcare decisions if you become incapable of doing so on your own. You are asked to name a primary HCPOA and an alternate, who would be responsible for decision making if the primary is unable or unwilling to assume this duty. The HCPOA document can be completed free of charge at Hess Memorial Hospital any time during regular business hours.

It is easy to complete a HCPOA, but a little more difficult to understand how it can actually be used. Simply filling out the paperwork does not mean that your primary HCPOA can sign your consent forms or make major medical decisions. In order for that to happen, the HCPOA must be activated. This means that two doctors have examined you and found that you were mentally incompetent to make decisions for yourself. Once the HCPOA has been activated then the primary can sign your consent forms and make other major decisions.

The same is true if an individual has a guardian. A guardian is appointed by a court of law to make decisions for another. Physicians do not need to examine an individual for competence if they have a guardian. A judge has already done this, and

determined that the person is incompetent. The guardianship and HCPOA papers are typically kept on file at the hospital. Having a copy of these papers can make obtaining the proper consents easier for both hospital staff and patients.

Usually there are no papers on file to indicate which parent has the ability to sign consent forms for a minor child. In some cases verifying custody may be necessary. A family member such as an aunt, grandmother, or a family friend cannot sign consent forms for a minor child unless they are the court appointed guardian. When a minor child comes to the hospital for most procedures the custodial parent must be notified and give verbal consent over the phone. If there is a question of custody, this is usually verified by hospital staff before proceeding.

How can you make this process easier to complete? First of all, make sure that a copy of your HCPOA is on file and the names, addresses and phone numbers listed on it are up-to-date. In case the document is ever activated, this will be important. Second, if you are the guardian of another, make sure that a copy of the guardianship papers are on file. If there is ever a change, make sure to update the file as soon as possible. Finally, if you are the custodial parent of a minor child, make sure you are available for a telephone consent if you cannot escort your child to their appointment.

There are a few simple steps to take in ensuring your healthcare future, and Hess Memorial Hospital is available to help you. For information on any of the services listed above, call the Social Services Department at 608-847-6161 today.



Health Care Power of Attorney papers can be filled out at Hess Memorial Hospital during regular business hours.

FREE Early Childhood Screenings

Thursday, May 3 at Hess Memorial Hospital



For children birth to 5 years of age

Have the progress of your child assessed by occupational and physical therapists, an audiologist and by a speech/language pathologist.

You must have an appointment!
Call 608-847-6161 x506

Show your kindness, volunteer

by Kathy Behnke

Volunteers at Mile Bluff Medical Center are important members of the healthcare team. They maintain high-quality patient care and perform a variety of functions throughout the hospital. They are needed and respected, and receive personal satisfaction from giving of their time and talents. To show volunteers just how special they are, the hospital thanks them with an appreciation banquet each year in their honor during National Volunteer Week in April. The theme for this year is "Volunteers: Priceless treasures."

Contrary to what you might think, volunteering for a medical center doesn't mean that you will only have the opportunity to work with patients. There are volunteer positions available in most departments.

At Mile Bluff volunteers:

- Distribute refreshments to patients/residents
- Bring reading materials to patients/residents
- Visit with patients/residents
- Read to patients/residents
- Work in the medical library
- File papers
- Do light typing and office work
- Deliver mail and flowers
- Interpret for various ethnic patient populations
- Help with stocking shelves
- Escort patients around hospital
- Make copies
- Stuff envelopes
- Accompany residents on outings and at special events



The list doesn't end there either! We're open to new ideas. If you have a talent you would like to share, please tell us.

As a volunteer, you are usually scheduled between the hours of 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. Choose hours that will fit both your schedule and ours. Volunteer a few hours a day, a week, a month - give whatever time you can. There is no experience necessary, just a desire to give of your time and talents to those who are in need of them and will appreciate them. All volunteers must be at least 14 years of age.

Volunteers are utilized in Hess Memorial Hospital and its outreach clinics, Fair View Nursing Home, Terrace Heights Retirement Community and Crest View Home and CBRF.

Call Mile Bluff Medical Center at 847-6161 x217 to volunteer in the hospital, clinics or Terrace Heights; call x290 to help out in Fair View Nursing Home. If you would like to donate your time at Crest View Home in New Lisbon, please call 562-3667.