

William R. Wieringa, P.C.

Selecting Agents

Often, when my clients are executing documents, they will ask me, “Who should I pick for my Power of Attorney and my Patient Advocate?”

Here are some criteria I always suggest when making those selections.

Power of Attorney. There are a couple criteria to consider when choosing someone to handle your financial affairs if you are unable. Select someone you believe will be reasonably close to you geographically, if and when they might be required to act. It would be difficult for someone to pay your electric bill or run to the bank for you if they live several states away. The second criterion is to select someone who is pretty well organized in their own financial affairs.

If you select a person who is always late paying their own bills or lets things slip through the cracks, the chances are that they will mess up your affairs as well. Now the person you select doesn't need any specialized expertise. He or she doesn't have to be an accountant or financial advisor or an attorney. When you and I need help of that kind, we hire it done. So can your Power of Attorney.

Patient Advocate. This is the person who will make medical decisions for you when you are unable to participate in your own decision making. Things to consider when making this selection are: Again, it would be best if this person is reasonably nearby you because sometimes medical decisions have to be made on an emergency basis. Also you will want someone who has a strong internal fortitude. What I mean by that is this person will be able to withstand challenges they may get from others about the decisions they make.

When someone is facing a severe medical condition and is unable to speak for themselves, often lots of people show up at the hospital with varying opinions about what should be done concerning treatment and end of life issues. You want your Patient Advocate to patiently and respectfully listen to friends, relatives, neighbors, and medical professionals but not be easily swayed by what they suggest. You want your Patient Advocate to carry out your wishes as you have previously detailed for them.