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**ADVANCE HEALTH DIRECTIVES FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**

**Consider an Advance Health Directive.** One very important fact that most people may not know is that when a child is more than 18 years of age, their health care decisions and information are protected under federal law. This means mom and dad can no longer make medical decisions for them. Furthermore, the parents can't access their child's health care records or be informed if something like a medical emergency happens to the child.

You can prevent this by having your adult child obtain an advance health directive, which names someone to make health care decisions if the student cannot. If the student does not have a proxy in place and they get into a devastating accident that leaves them incapacitated, the hospital or medical facility has the right to make all necessary medical decisions. This will force parents or guardians to go to court and obtain Guardianship over their adult child.

In the event of a devastating illness or accident there may not be time to wait for a court hearing. Also, a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA") release form signed by the student will enable a parent to have access to their medical records. Consult our office to discuss this. We will work with you to sit down and get it done. Discussing this with an 18-year-old may be the last thing you want to do, but think of what could happen if access to your child in an emergency is denied or, worse yet, you are not informed.