



TERRI'S PRESS RELEASE

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Disability and Life Advocacy Group Warn Against Veteran's Administration Booklet

St. Petersburg – Today, members of the Terri Schindler-Schiavo Foundation (www.terrisfight.org) are speaking out against the republication of a 1997 booklet produced by the Department of Veteran's Affairs titled *Your Life, Your Choices*.

The Foundation was established by the parents and siblings of the late Terri Schiavo and now serves the disabled, chronically ill and elderly communities as advocates for their right to continue wanted medical services and intervention.

The Foundation has taken issue with the language of the booklet, published by the VA, for its treatment of legal and medical decision-making issues, which it finds to be private matters between patient, physician and family. The Foundation's primary spokesperson, Bobby Schindler (brother of the late Terri Schiavo) is calling the booklet a disservice to military personnel as well as disabled, ill and elderly persons.

"It is quite clear that the language used in *Your Life, Your Choices* is encouraging individuals to make life and death decisions based on a 'quality of life' judgment and not the Constitutionally supported position that the value of all citizens is equal and each has a right to live," says Schindler.

"It is my opinion that this particular booklet encourages the idea that people with chronic health issues, disability or advanced age are 'burdensome to society'. Furthermore, I found it very disquieting that the Department of Veteran's Affairs would publish any document that speaks to the legal and very personal issues of deciding what medical treatments or therapies are appropriate to the individual. This booklet even uses the term 'vegetable' to describe those individuals living with a cognitive disability or neurological injury."

Schindler continues: "The terminology used elicits the extreme prejudice that now exists towards people with disabilities or other complicated medical issues. It serves to demonstrate how widely misunderstood brain injuries continue to be. The language isn't simply offensive, but it is also particularly dehumanizing when directed towards the men and women who have given their lives, their bodies and their well-being in defense of this country. Certainly, United States military personnel, who are returning from these theatres with profound brain injuries, should have every expectation that their medical needs are met and not coerced away from them."

Terri's Foundation assist families in danger of losing loved-ones to futile care policies and other challenges by providing a clearing house of information, a network of legal and medical contacts and support through referral to compassionate care-givers and community services.

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