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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



### **August's Aging Insights "Conversation of Your Life" Encore *Episode 107 spotlights end-of-life planning***

**TRENTON, NJ** (July 31, 2020) – Have you made your end-of-life decisions and let them be known? If not, why not? What if a crisis occurs and you're not able to express your wishes?

The August episode of [Aging Insights](#) is an encore broadcast of "*Conversation of Your Life*" from 2018, which covered these often-sensitive and very timely issues. Host Melissa Chalker interviewed Deborah Levine, MPH, then the Director of Community Health at the [New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute](#), and Chaplain Ted Taylor, Director, Pastoral Care and Training, [Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton](#). The two guests discuss the Quality Institute's Conversation of Your Life ([COYL](#)) program, why it's important to talk about end-of-life planning, various end-of-life planning documents available and why your wishes should be put in writing.

Launched in 2011, Aging Insights is an award-winning, half-hour monthly TV show produced by NJ Foundation for Aging, which promotes dialogue and provides resources on critical issues for older adults and caregivers. Episode 107/ "*Conversation of Your Life*" can be viewed on [NJFA's website](#) and more than 70 public-access stations across NJ (check local listings for channels and times).

On the show, Levine explained that several years back, the Quality Institute, in partnership with the Rutgers Eagleton Center for Public Policy, conducted research on NJ's attitudes on end-of-life care. Sixty-percent of adult respondents said they were comfortable discussing end-of-life wishes at a wellness visit or at the dinner table, but the same number had never done that before.

The [COYL](#) program provides mayors and community partners with tools to develop community conversations around end-of-life-planning in a culturally sensitive and accessible way. COYL, now in 14 counties across New Jersey, has also developed innovative programs to continue these critical conversations during the global pandemic and the need for social distancing. COYL's COVID-19 resources are available [here](#).

Levine said that people are often afraid to have this conversation. "Talking about death or end-of-life wishes is intimidating, sometimes taboo—even among doctors—so it can be really hard to bring this up, even if you'd like to. If you don't talk about it, then your family, your loved ones, your doctors are going to give it their best guess and you might not receive the care that you truly want."

Taylor echoed her sentiments. "Time and again, day by day, I and a lot of my colleagues in health care chaplaincy, as well as ethicists, have the experience of families coming to these crisis events with their loved ones, at the end of life and usually in an ICU, without having thought through all of this," he said. "And the crisis becomes even more painful because there has not been a direction.

"Sometimes, days and weeks can go by. You just see the suffering in that family because there hadn't really been a conversation about what it's supposed to be like. And I also see the suffering on the faces of my colleagues who are nurses and doctors because we're trying to do the right thing—doing it without direction from that person," Taylor added. "It's become a passion of mine to give people information so they can make wise choices that align with their values and might not align with the values of some of their family members, and so there needs to be clarity. I encourage anyone who's of legal age to consider writing their advance directive. We never know what will happen."

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