



**HOUGUM  
LAW FIRM, LLC**  
ESTATE PLANNING & ELDER LAW

**715.843.5001**  
info@hougumlaw.com

April 2018 Newsletter



## Ways You Can Help a Caregiver Before Burnout Happens

Today, there are over forty-five million unpaid family caregivers. Caregivers manage a high level of stress and numerous responsibilities each day. Often, many family caregivers still work at least part-time in addition to caring for an aging parent.

Caregiving is not easy. It can be a very demanding role both emotionally and physically. Due to this stress, it is not uncommon for caregivers to experience burnout. Burnout can manifest in a number of symptoms including increased stress, fatigue, anxiety or depression. Caregivers who are at risk of burnout may be easily irritated, experience the loss of enjoyment in their favorite activities and withdraw from friends and family.

It is critical for us to help the caregivers we know before burnout becomes an issue. Let us share a number of ideas you can use to support the caregivers in your life right now.

### 1. Make meals.

Prepared meals are a great way to help a caregiver. Although it may seem like a small thing to do, having a meal prepared in advance can greatly reduce a caregiver's stress as it is one less thing he or she needs to handle during the day. If you decide to make meals, be sure to ask if there are any dietary restrictions you need to be aware of in advance. (Continued on Page 2)

(Contd. from Page 1) 2. Do the grocery shopping.

It can be difficult for the caregiver to fit grocery shopping, into his or her busy schedule. Ask the caregiver for a weekly grocery list and pick the groceries up! When you have extra time, you can continue to help by offering to prepare some of the meals for the week.

3. Do the laundry.

Outsourcing dirty clothing to laundry companies can become expensive, but many caregivers simply do not have the time to do the laundry. You can help caregivers by completing this task for them each week.

4. Help with yard work.

In the spring and summer when the grass is quickly growing, the yard can quickly get out of control when there are a few missed weeks of work. When caregivers have a few spare moments, however, yard work is rarely at the top of their list. Help them out by taking over the yard duties such as weeding, watering or mowing the lawn.

5. Offer a respite visit.

While many caregivers do not voluntarily take time for themselves, it is crucial for mental health. Help the caregiver in your life by allowing him or her to schedule alone time by providing a respite visit. Even if you can only give a few hours, this can make a world of difference for the caregiver.

No matter how big or small the gesture you make, any bit of help can alleviate the stress in a caregiver's busy schedule. Use these ideas or develop your own to help the caregivers in your life. Be sure to help out when you can and also be on the lookout for signs of burnout before they happen. If you or your loved ones need help with elder law planning, do not wait to contact our office and schedule a meeting with Attorney Alan Hougum.

## Learn How to Plan for Your Child Who Has Autism

Parents of autistic children can face significant challenges. Depending on the diagnosis and the child, his or her assistance needs may vary. Once children with autism reaches the age of majority, however, they are legally in charge of themselves. Parents no longer have the legal right to make decisions for their child as they once did during their disabled child's youth.

There are considerations related to disability and legal authority that parents of disabled children must consider early. As a parent you need to consider how much authority needs to be retained over your child. Autism is not black and white. Some people can make sound decisions in some areas but not in others. Parents should look to see how competent their child is in making medical, educational, financial, and vocational decisions.

Planning ahead for how your disabled child will be best protected as he or she becomes an adult is crucial. Let us share three key considerations to help you (Continued on Page 3)



(Contd. from Page 2) understand how to plan for your child.

### 1. Consider guardianship for your autistic child.

When any child reaches the age of legal majority, a parent no longer has legal authority to make decisions on his or her behalf. In the eyes of the law, even people with cognitive, mental health and or developmental disabilities are autonomous as adults. For those of us with capacity to make legal decisions, we can select an agent to act in our stead should we be unable to do so ourselves. If your autistic child does not have the requisite capacity to make estate planning documents such as a durable power of attorney, guardianship may be necessary. Guardianship is the court process of first finding someone not to have the legal capacity to make decisions and, second, naming a guardian to act in the person's place.

### 2. Plan early for transfer of guardianship.

If a parent dies and has guardianship over his or her autistic child, there needs to be a plan in place to decide who will assume this responsibility. Without this planning, there can be conflict within the family or an absence of a person to care for the autistic child. In this instance, the guardianship court may choose someone the parents would not originally choose themselves.

### 3. Utilizing a special needs trust in estate planning.

It is important to meet early with your estate planning attorney to decide who will step into this role should the primary guardian be unable to act. A special needs trust is one of the planning tools we use to help families plan for the future. It can be set up for people with disabilities to ensure that money will be available for a person with autism throughout his or her lifetime. It can be used for a special needs beneficiary while not interrupting his or her ability to receive public benefits, such as Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income.

We want to work with you to make sure that your child's needs are met. Planning early for your autistic child is important to ensure he or she will be provided for both now and in the future. To schedule an appointment with attorney Alan Hougum to start this planning, do not wait to contact our office today!



305 S. 18TH AVENUE, SUITE 200  
WAUSAU, WISCONSIN 54401  
WWW.HOUGUMLAW.COM  
715-843-5001  
INFO@HOUGUMLAW.COM



Attorney Alan Hougum and his compassionate team will help you protect yourself and the people you love with strategic planning strategies, such as wills, asset protection and trusts, powers of attorney, estate trusts, elder law planning, Medicaid crisis planning, Medicaid eligibility and application, probate and estate administration, avoiding probate, charitable planning and giving, special needs, and estate tax planning. Hougum Law Firm, LLC, serves the entire Wausau, Wisconsin area.

Our office is located in Wausau at  
305 S. 18th Avenue, Suite 200, Wausau, Wisconsin 54401. Do you have questions you need answered before or after your appointment? Just let us know! Contact us by email at [info@hougumlaw.com](mailto:info@hougumlaw.com) or call us at 715-843-5001.