



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

715.843.5001
info@hougumlaw.com

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5 Key Tips to Being an Effective Advocate for Your Aging Parent

As aging adults continue to get older, it can become difficult for them to maintain a healthy grasp on the things that impact them the most. This can include their living conditions, finances, and legal matters. Over time, this lack of attention can extend to their medications and medical affairs, as well as anything else that helps support their well-being and quality of life.

As an adult child of aging parents what can you do? What do you need to be aware of? How do you plan forward for a time when you may need to step in to help your parent?

We often see that when elder parents can no longer protect themselves, their adult children become their voice. They become their advocates. Let us share five key tips to effectively stepping into this role.

1. **Paying Attention.** Effectively speaking up for an aging parent and securing what he or she needs begins with noticing a diminished ability. This can be gradual, where small initial changes lead to bigger problems, or all at once due to an injury or illness.

If your aging parent is receiving any form of care services, you may need to pay closer attention to nonverbal cues. In these instances, your parent may not be able to (Continued on Page 2)

(Contd. from Page 1) provide feedback as descriptively as you need to make decisions. Do not wait to get involved and get the information you need. When making decisions for a loved one you need to know what exactly is going on in order to effectively advocate for solutions.

2. Organization. Organization is also key. As an effective advocate, you may need to manage healthcare, financial, legal, and caregiving records. Information should be easily accessible, and when possible, digitized. Knowing the facts and having documentation to back them up is critical for effective advocacy.

3. Confidence. Another important quality for the advocate is confidence. You need to be able to speak up about important matters for your aging parent. When it comes to doctors, lawyers, financial professionals, insurance companies, and others your parent needs assistance from, be clear about what you need. Direct communication and assertiveness may help you best secure what your elderly parent needs.

4. Ask Questions. If at any point you don't understand what's going on regarding your aging parent, ask questions. Don't settle for answers that make you uncomfortable or uneasy. Gathering information and making good decisions is the core job of an effective advocate. Ask questions, take notes, don't assume anything, and decide for yourself.

5. Persistence. Finally, never give up. While seeking the best results for your parent, you're bound to hit roadblocks and have questions. Always remember, your elderly loved ones are too important not to speak up.

We know just how hard it is to take care of your aging parents. Do not wait to contact our law office and schedule a meeting with Attorney Alan Hougum to discuss your concerns right now or to ask for help in planning for the future.

Is Your Estate Plan Designed To Do What You Need It To?

Estate planning is more than just creating a last will and testament. It is more than deciding who your heirs will be or at what age they should inherit from you. Your estate planning is about not only creating a legacy for your family, but ensuring that when the time comes both you and your family are protected.

While many of the people who come to our office know what they want, they do not know how to get there. We often find that our potential clients are initially focused on what will happen when they pass away and have spent very little time thinking about the protections they need during life. Understanding the planning options available to you right now and how to use them based on your own unique circumstances can provide you and your loved ones with peace of mind.

Let us share some key considerations about what your estate planning need to do for you both now and in the future. Our goal is to work with you to determine if your existing estate planning is a good fit for your and your family's needs. (Continued on Page 3)



(Contd. from Page 2) 1. Your agent needs to make decisions as you would.

One of the main benefits of establishing a durable power of attorney is the ability it gives you to designate your own agent. If you do not appoint someone while you are still competent to do so, you may lose the ability to do so at a later time. You have complete authority to choose whomever you like as your agent under your durable power of attorney, but it is crucial to appoint a person who you trust implicitly and who will be able to act as you would in a crisis. This individual will make important decisions on your behalf and you want to identify a person who will be able to act as you would in making decisions.

2. Your estate planning should consider long-term care planning.

It can be challenging to create a plan for all possible scenarios; however, ensuring your durable power of attorney provides the ability to plan for long-term care can be very important. Certain situations such as choosing a skilled nursing facility and finding a way to pay for care, may not feel critical now but will be in the future. Planning for this now in your estate planning documents can help provide a level of protection that will ensure you are able to receive the long-term care you need in the future.

3. Your planning can provide your loved ones with peace of mind.

Mental or physical incapacity, whether it is temporary or permanent, can take an emotional toll on your close friends and family members. You can help alleviate some of their worries by ensuring your wants and needs are heard and documented in your estate plan. If certain responsibilities are left unassigned or certain planning is not completed, your loved ones may be left without guidance in a crisis. Be sure to discuss and outline your wishes with your estate planning attorney now to avoid any unnecessary proceedings or confusion.

These are just a few of the benefits of creating an estate plan that is designed to do what you need it to both now and in the future. With so many planning options to consider and decisions to make, we are here to be a resource for you. Do not wait to contact our law firm with your questions because we are here to help.



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 or call us at 715-843-5001.