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June 2020 Newsletter



Tips for Addressing Early Signs of Alzheimer's Disease in an Elder Loved One

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month. The annual campaign provides much needed educational and support resources to millions of seniors, impacted family members, and caregivers around the country. There are currently more than 5.8 million Americans living with Alzheimer's Disease and it is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S annually.

While there is no known cure, early detection is the best path for effective treatment and long-term quality of life. This highlights the importance of identifying warning signs and taking action as soon as possible. Common symptoms include:

- Memory loss
- Difficulty solving problems and completing simple tasks
- Confusion about times and places
- New speaking and writing issues
- Poor judgment
- Misplacing familiar objects

The normal aging process sometimes involves similar occurrences, making initial detection

(Contd. from Page 1) somewhat difficult. A doctor's evaluation, however, would provide definitive results. According to the nonprofit Alzheimer's Association, a skilled physician can diagnose Alzheimer's Disease with more than 90 percent accuracy. Contact a senior loved one's primary care doctor or an internist to make an appointment as soon as you suspect something may be wrong. Make sure follow-up appointments are conducted with a physician the senior adult feels comfortable with, as the prospect of a positive diagnosis can be understandably upsetting.

If the diagnosis is positive, consider exploring immediate treatment options for Alzheimer's symptoms. Ask the senior adult's evaluating physician about applying for clinical trials, access to cutting edge prescription drugs, and developing research materials. Begin planning for future health decisions, as well as living arrangements, transportation needs, and financial and legal matters. Acting in the early stages of the disease can allow your senior loved one to more competently express his or her desires.

It will also be important to establish a support system. Finding support for you and your senior family member is what Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month is all about. The Alzheimer's Association is a leading participant in the annual June event. The organization offers a 24-hour helpline and a community resource finder for Alzheimer's related services. It also operates an online Caregiver Center that helps Alzheimer's patients and their families find care options.

If you or someone you know would like more information or guidance regarding health care decisions, estate planning, and other legal matters, our law firm is here to help. Contact us to schedule a meeting with attorney Alan Hougum where we can discuss your questions and concerns.

Tips for You When Your Spouse is Moving Into a Nursing Home

Is it time to move your spouse into a nursing home? You have spent decades with your spouse and now, unfortunately, the time may have come where you can no longer give him or her the support and attention that you know he or she deserves. For most couples, this means turning to the tough task of placing a spouse in a nursing home so that they get the attention and care that is needed.

One way to pragmatically approach this difficult situation is by having a checklist of things that will help you make the best choice. At the top of that list is to ensure that the home that you have selected is Medicaid/Medicare approved. This will go a long way in helping you manage your finances while your spouse is properly cared for.

Let us take a look at some other factors that you may want to consider when choosing the right care facility.

- Review the inspection report. There is no doubt that your spouse's wellbeing comes first. You will want to find out if the nursing home's inspection report shows any type of care problems or other citations. This may include a failure to meet one or more state or federal requirements. If the home is Medicaid qualified then it should be no problem obtaining the



(Contd. from Page 2) most recent state or federal survey of the facility. These reports are crucial because they will tell you how well the nursing home meets federal health and safety regulations. You can also find these reports on most state survey agency websites and Medicare.gov.

- Follow-up on the inspection report. If the home has a citation, it does not mean that they cannot care for your spouse. It can be a good idea, however, to make sure that the facility has corrected all citations in its last state inspection report.
- Watch for signs of potential abuse. A very important issue that must also be considered is how you can avoid abuse. To do this, you will have to try and do your own assessment when you go into the home for information. Try to spend some time observing the relationship between staff and residents. Some things to note are: Does the staff appear to be warm, polite, and respectful? Does the nursing home do proper background checks to make sure they do not hire staff members who may have a history of abuse, neglect, or mistreatment of residents in the state nurse aid registry? If a person associated with the home is found to be abusive, what measures does the nursing home have in place for reporting abuse and neglect?
- Ask about measures protecting against abuse. It is also perfectly normal to ask the nursing home what they are doing to ensure that residents are safe from abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and even exploitation. Also, you may want to find out how you can report any incidents that threaten the care and safety of your spouse.

As you can see, there are many questions that you will want answered before placing your spouse into a nursing home. You can also check out the Medicare.gov website for more information. Our law office also acts as a resource for those considering placing a spouse in a nursing home. There are many important related legal issues to consider in this kind of life change. We are here to provide you with legal support to help protect yourself and your loved one. Call our office today to schedule an appointment with attorney Alan Hougum.



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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.

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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.