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Are There Questions I Should Ask My Parents If I am Named in Their Estate Plan?

Are you the adult child of aging parents? Are you concerned about their future and wondering whether they have completed any estate planning? It is a fact that less than half of all adult Americans have completed their estate plan. As you look to a future where you may be called on to assist your parents, look for ways to encourage them to begin creating their estate plan. Their plan will not be just for the future but, most importantly, for right now to be sure that if something happens to them you will have the authority to help them out.

However, perhaps your parents have created their estate plan and that is good news. By having their estate plan in place you know they have protected themselves by having a decision maker if there is a crisis. Do you know who they have chosen to be their decision maker? You may be surprised to learn you are the person who they selected to make their decisions. With the knowledge that you are their decision maker, we know you may have questions about the task ahead. Because you are named in your parents estate plan you will want to know what your duties and responsibilities actually are. We would like to share five key considerations with you right here.

1. If there is a crisis, what happens? This is an important question to ask your parents.

What do they want you to do in a sudden crisis? Now a crisis could include anything from being in a coma due to a serious car accident to being stuck overseas because of a flight delay. What do they see as your role? What expectations do your parents have for you? By knowing what the advanced plans are now and knowing the wishes of your parents you will be able to make the best decisions for them when you need to successfully navigate a crisis.

2. If health care decisions for your parents need to be made, what are their preferences? Health care planning is an important part of an estate plan. If your parents named you as their decision maker then you need to know what they want for their health care. For example: What do they want for their general care? What is their goal for long-term care? If their doctor recommended it, would they want life support? We know these are tough questions to ask, but you need to learn what their health care preferences are so you can make decisions that support their wishes for health care in any situation. Always have an up-to-date list of their diagnoses, doctors, specialists, and medicines.

3. If financial decisions for your parents need to be made, what preparations have they made? If you have been named as their agent in their durable power of attorney or a trustee in their trust, you need to find out as much as you can about their finances. You should ask your parents questions about where they invest, who they work with, and what type of management fees they pay? Find out if they have life insurance or other policies with beneficiaries that might pass outside the estate plan? Are all their policies, insurances and estate planning tools current? By starting the discussion with your parents now you will know what to expect should you need to step in.

4. Do your parents want to be sure their legacy is protected if anything should happen to them? In addition to creating an estate plan to protect themselves, your parents also want to protect their future, their family, and their legacy. Do you know what legacy they wish to leave behind? What is the vision your parents have for the time when they are no longer here? By knowing their vision you can be sure to see it come to fruition.

5. Did your parents use a Wisconsin estate planning attorney? When discussing their estate planning, ask your parents the following questions: Who did your parents work with in creating their estate plan? What will be your relationship with their attorney? Where are the original documents kept? Is it possible to meet the attorney for your parents in advance to make sure you understand your roles and responsibilities? Be sure to let your parents know that you are open to having this discussion with their attorney.

Being named within your parents' estate plan brings serious questions that you need answered. We understand these challenges and want to support both you and your parents to get the experienced legal guidance you need. We encourage you to contact us and schedule a meeting with attorney Alan Hougum today.



Amazing Ways Technology Can Help Your Aging Loved Ones Stay at Home Safely

Are you familiar with the amazing ways technology can help your aging loved ones stay at home safely? Let us share with you. Right now are your loved ones currently living in their own home, taking care of themselves by handling their own shopping, cooking, medications and driving to appointments? In fact, do you only have to call or visit occasionally? That being said, are you beginning to notice that your loved ones are aging and may need some extra help? Are you wondering where that help can come from?

This is where we would like to share with you all the amazing ways technology can help your aging loved ones stay at home safely. When used appropriately, the right technology can make it easier for seniors to engage with their family and friends and remain healthy and safe in their independent living situations. Next, we would like to share a few technologies that might help your aging loved ones. We encourage you to discuss these technologies with your aging loved ones. We would also encourage you and your loved ones to consult with their primary care practitioners to help identify areas where technology may help them now and in the future.

First, we know how important health and wellness are for you and your aging loved ones. This is definitely an area where technology can be of assistance. Since COVID-19 you are probably very familiar with on-line doctor visits. In fact, telehealth is becoming more and more common. By using this technology it will be easier for your loved ones to manage illnesses and connect with their health care professionals while at home. During the first few video visits with their physicians, plan to be there to assist your loved ones. Assisting them now will give your loved ones the confidence to connect with their physicians independently. Another great technology system is medication management. These systems can issue reminders, dispense medications, monitor medication usage, and notify

(Contd. from Page 3)

caregivers when doses are missed. Two of the products available to consumers to purchase or rent are epill, and MedMinder.

Second, technology can help keep our aging loved ones from being isolated or lonely, which is a very valid concern. Also, technology can definitely help fight social isolation. Believe it or not, just using technology as simple as a cell phone can increase the ability of your aging loved ones to connect with all their family and friends. Look for phones with large buttons and clear screens. In fact, the Lively Flip phone was designed for seniors, and comes with a special one-click button to connect with a member of the Lively Response Team. This team can summon help or connect the caller with a board-certified doctor or nurse. Another technology is available for your aging loved ones who have hearing loss. With a captioning app like Clear Captions, your loved ones will be able to read phone calls.

Finally, you should consider a Medical Alert System for your aging loved ones. This type of system, which now comes standard in many home security systems, can also help your aging loved ones age in place. If your aging loved ones have a fall there can be an immediate response with a medical alert system. This system can also include a daily check-in to make sure your loved one is safe throughout the day. There are numerous companies to choose from but a great place to start is to determine if your loved one would wear a care button or bracelet to have immediate access to help or if there needs to be a home monitoring system instead.

We know this article raises more questions than it answers. We encourage you to contact us and schedule a meeting with attorney Alan Hougum today.



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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.