

Your Personal Care Needs

As part of your Elder Care Law planning, it is important to look at the three domains of elder care.

You are working on your estate plan documents. This is the *legal* care domain.

You may be working on restructuring or retitling your assets, changing beneficiary designations and the like. This is the *financial* care domain.

Now, let's address the *personal* care domain. This domain includes health care, family and social supports, home, and transportation.

Health Care

It is likely you already have a primary care physician who is managing your health status, providing guidance regarding the recommended screenings and tests you need. But is your family aware of your health status and needs? Do they know what medications you take and what supplements and vitamins you take?

This is important because if you needed care outside your primary physician's office, your doctor's medical record may not be available. And you may not be able to access your electronic health record. We recommend you complete the personal health information record online or the one provided with your Elder Care Law binder so that your family has access to your current health history.

One of the documents you may have signed was an Advance Directive. Do you know what that means? It gives authority for someone to access your health care records, talk with your care providers, and make care decisions in the event you are unable.

But do not stop there. Your health care

agent or surrogate needs to be able to make decisions based on your wishes. It is not always as clear as to use or not use a breathing machine (ventilator) or feeding tube.

With today's technology, therapy can take the place of your kidneys, your heartbeat, or your breathing. You can get nutrition, get therapy, and be monitored in your brain. Physicians and care providers cannot always tell you the likely outcome.

What is quality of life to you? How will your family know what decisions to make? We have provided a booklet, *Do You Know My Wishes?* to help you review these issues then discuss them with your surrogate decision maker. It's not an easy subject, but we can help you with the discussions.

If you already have a chronic illness, it is important to discuss with your physician the likely progression of your illness and decisions that may need to be made in the future.

Again, this can be a difficult discussion, but it will prepare you and your family for what may come and will help with making those decisions when needed.

Family and Social Supports

Consider who your supports are and how you interact with them. Do you have children or grandchildren who are close by, or have they moved across the state or the country? Are your parents or siblings still around and where do they live? Are they available to assist if needed, or are you involved in their care? Identifying family support is the first step in getting through a crisis.

After family, we look at community. Do you live in a neighborhood that is age friendly? Is it a well-established neighborhood that you have lived in for years or a new community, maybe one geared to those 55 and older? Are there activities in your neighborhood to help you engage with those who live nearby?

Depending on your age, you may still find support and community from your employment situation. Do you have other social affiliations through your religious or professional organizations? We often look at those community supports in a short-term crisis, but many friendships can provide support and guidance through long-term illness and disability.

Find your family and friends, embrace them and hang on to them. Decide who will care for you if the need arises, and how they will manage your care.

Home

Your home is one of the most important investments you have. How long have you

lived there? How long do you plan to live there?

Considering these issues now. Looking at your home through the eyes of someone who needs more assistance can help you plan appropriately. We have several guides that will help you to age-proof your home.

If you need a contractor to help, be sure to find one that is a certified aging in place home builder. You can find them at the National Association of Home Builders through this link: <https://www.nahb.org/>

Transportation

As we age, transportation can become a sticky wicket. We all want to continue driving as it satisfies our independence, but sometimes we want to drive longer than we should safely. There are safe driving assessments we can do to make sure we are still safe drivers but, if we have to give up driving, we have to have a plan for getting where we need to go.

As you plan for your care as you age, transportation should be taken into account. Will you live somewhere where transportation is provided? Do you have family and friends that will take you not only do doctor appointments, but to the grocery and for an outing? Does family live nearby and are they available to drive you when you need to get somewhere, especially during the daytime?