

The Impact of COVID-19: We Are in This Together

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In these columns, I generally try to provide legal tips and advice regarding how you, as seniors, can plan to make your life easier and to be prepared for life's inevitable emergencies.

Well, here we are. We are all living through an emergency that none of us could have foreseen or planned for. We are all hunkering down, confused about what the next day will bring, concerned about the wellbeing of our families and friends. Jobs are being lost. Lives are in danger. What do you do next?

First, take care of yourself. As seniors (I'm with you; I turned 70 in January), we are especially vulnerable right now. Prepare for the medical emergency that might hit.

- Make sure your health care proxy (HCP) is accessible if needed. Most seniors have a health care proxy, but many have never given it to the person they named as their agent. Many more don't know where it is. If you have not given a copy to your doctor, you should. This would also be a great time to talk to the agent you named in your proxy about how you would like to be treated if Covid-19 hits you.
- Talk to the person you have named in your Power of Attorney. That person may need to be doing things for you if you're in the hospital or simply because you're stuck at home. That has become particularly true for folks in assisted living communities that have been essentially locked down.

Second, take care of those around you. This applies to your best friend

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and also to that woman or man down the street whom you see (or saw) all the time but is now stuck at home. Who knows, that neighbor may have no one to talk to right now, no one with whom to share the incredible anxiety that we are all facing. Email is fine, but there is something comforting about hearing someone's voice, so while we encourage social distancing, consider reaching out with a phone call.

Third, stay connected with your community. Senior centers and other traditional gathering places for seniors are now closed, but other sources of great information exist to help you navigate what is happening in your community. In particular, check out your community cable station, either by turning to your local cable TV channel or by visiting their website. The folks at your community cable station are dedicated to keeping you informed about the services and programs that will help you cope, and to keeping you in touch with the rest of your community.

Finally, this may be a great time to do the estate plan you were always going to do but put off because you did not have the time or it was really not that important. You have the time. And it could be really important. If you need more information on this, you can contact me at (508) 860-1470 or abergeon@mirickoconnell.com. You may also find Frank and Mary's YouTube channel to be a helpful resource, as I address many common issues facing seniors and their loved ones. All of my cable TV shows, educational seminars and 10-minute elder law Q&A Fireside Chats are available at www.youtube.com/elderlawfrankandmary.