

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attorneys adapting to social distancing

ELMONT, NY (April 22, 2020) — New York State on Pause and social distancing have changed how attorneys interact with their clients while preparing legal documents.

The coronavirus pandemic has given greater urgency to the preparation of legal documents related to end-of-life issues, causing many people who delayed or avoided preparing such documents to suddenly seek attorneys' services.

However, the inability to conduct face-to-face meetings with clients who are sheltering at home or who are in facilities that do not permit visitors has led to new forms of meetings. The emerging socially distant meetings practiced by at least one creative elder law attorney, [Annabel Bazante, Esq.](#), include:

- Drive through document signings in which an attorney will meet with a client in a public space. The client remains in their vehicle and the attorney passes documents through a cracked window for signing. The clients then pass the documents through the window to the attorney.
- Outdoor meetings where attorneys set up socially distant tables for all the participating parties. The various parties then approach the table to sign or review documents.
- Teleconference signings in which a client, attorney and witnesses gather on a digital teleconference platform like Zoom to sign wills, health care proxies, powers of attorney and other documents, a practice authorized by Gov. Andrew Cuomo through executive order 202.14 on April 7.

Annabel Bazante, a Nassau County-based elder law attorney, has conducted drive-through and outdoor signings for her clients.

“Drive-through appointments are ideal for clients who simply have to sign documents. In the case of more complex matters that require witnesses, an outdoor setting with socially distant tables allows for the safe and legally enforceable execution of wills or other documents,” said Annabel Bazante.

As for the teleconferencing executive order, Annabel Bazante envisions many challenges, especially for an elderly person who is already partially or fully incapacitated by Covid-19. Additionally, the requirement for same-day transmission from a hospital or nursing home of a client's documents, to witnesses who are physically located outside of the hospital or nursing home, may be beyond the abilities of a facility's overburdened staff.

Annabel Bazante is available to discuss the complexities of attorneys' new socially distant practices and Gov. Cuomo's executive order regarding wills.

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