

## CHOOSING AN ELDER LAW ATTORNEY

The elder population is growing faster than the general population as a whole. Both the number and percentage of the total population of elderly are increasing.

As this segment of the population grows, its legal needs grow also. Since most of us will someday need the services of an elder law attorney for ourselves, friends, or loved ones, it is important to become familiar with the practice of "elder law."

The practice of elder law includes but is not limited to, the following:

- (1) Trusts;
- (2) Estates;
- (3) Tax law;
- (4) Nursing home law;
- (5) Government agency law.
  - (a) Medicaid law;
  - (b) Medicare law;
- (6) Insurance law; and
- (7) Advance directives.

The elder law lawyer needs to consider the special needs of his elderly clientele in his practice. The needs and/or concerns of the elder lawyer should be the following:

- (1) Making his or her office accessible to the elderly;
- (2) Making house calls or nursing home calls;
- (3) Having the knowledge that representation of the elderly takes time and patience;
- (4) Acknowledging that the elderly may be afraid of lawyers since they may have never dealt with the profession before;
- (5) Having knowledge of community resources for the benefit of the elder client and his or her family;
- (6) Having knowledge of private or public social workers who may assist the elderly with specific needs and/or assist in obtaining community resources.

The average general practice attorney usually does not have the experience or knowledge sufficient to properly represent an elderly client, so it is important for one who needs an elder care attorney to do some checking before entering into an attorney/client relationship.

Many people don't go to an elder care attorney until they reach nursing home care stages. It is a good idea to see an elder care attorney as one grows older so that present and future needs may be addressed at an earlier time thus alleviating the crisis or panic which may arise from waiting until a legal emergency occurs.