**Caring For Yourself with the Right Estate Planning Prescription**

To all front-line and “essential” workers: Thank you for all of your hard work—day in and day out (and often evenings, nights, and weekends). You tirelessly give of yourself to care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Whether you are caring for them in a hospital, therapy room, or patient’s home, you are there to protect and help the patient gain a better tomorrow.

However, one important question remains. What have you done to prepare for your own care? Working together, we can craft the best possible estate planning prescription that will protect you today, tomorrow, and well into the future using the best legal tools available.

A ***revocable living trust*** is an excellent way to manage and protect your money and property. Contrary to what some may think, you don’t have to have lots of money and property to benefit from a trust. The two major players involved in a trust are the trustee and the beneficiary. During your lifetime, as long as you are able and choose to do so, you can act as the trustee and can control all money and property in the trust. However, when you are managing the money and property, you are now doing so as the trustee and not as the individual owner. In addition to serving as the initial trustee, you are also the beneficiary. This means that although you have transferred your money and property into the trust, you are still the one receiving the benefits of that money and property.

In the event you are unable to act (i.e., you become incapacitated) or pass away, the individual you have named as your successor trustee will step in and manage the money and property according to the instructions you have included in the written trust agreement. Even if you are still alive when the successor takes over, it will be the successor trustee’s responsibility to manage and use the money and property for your benefit. Then, upon your passing, the successor trustee is required to hold or distribute the money and property in the trust according to the instructions in the trust instrument. This transition of trusteeship between you and your successor trustee happens without court involvement, making it quick and private.

A ***financial power of attorney*** allows the trusted person you choose (your “agent”) to handle your financial matters on your behalf. The agent can handle a wide variety of transactions from signing checks to opening a bank account to filing your taxes, depending upon the authority you grant that individual in the power of attorney. This can be a helpful tool if you are incapacitated, bedridden, or just unavailable to engage in the necessary transaction. The beauty of this document is that you can customize it so that you will have the assistance you need, when you need it, based on your individual situation and wishes.

As you are probably well aware, a ***medical power of attorney*** allows you to name a trusted individual to communicate your medical wishes in the event you are unable to do so. It is important that you choose someone you trust because you will not be able to oversee your agent’s decisions. It is equally important that you convey your wishes to this individual clearly. This can be accomplished through the use of a ***living will*** *or* ***advanced directive.***

Additionally, you can execute a ***HIPAA authorization*** in the event you would like other trusted individuals to have access to your medical information (i.e., to get a status update on your condition or obtain test results for you) but do not want them to have the ability to make decisions. In a stressful situation, the dissemination of reliable information straight from the healthcare provider can be a way to ease tensions and allow everyone to process what is going on with a level head.

We understand that you are busy and your time is valuable. To better assist our clients, we are available to meet by telephone or video conference. We may also be able to use remote procedures for the signing and executing of your documents, eliminating the need for you to come into our office at all. Your estate planning should not have to wait until you have a day off. Give us a call so we can get started caring for you right away.