How to Plan Ahead Four Steps

It is never too early to begin planning ahead for life transitions. Declining health, accidents, or any of life’s many curve balls can leave us suddenly in need of care and dependent on another for major decisions. Family, despite their best intentions, may be unable to help.

Make your preferences for health care, living arrangements, and end-of-life care known to your friends and family. Address financial issues such as wills, trusts, life insurance, and paying for long-term care. Communicate with the people you would like to execute your wishes. Designate a healthcare power of attorney and financial power of attorney, and make sure each person (your "designated agents") has copies of or access to any important documents, such as advance directives or insurance policies. Also, make sure your partner and family know where you store your paperwork.

In lieu of family or friends, you may also ask a professional to serve as your designated agent, trustee, or attorney-in-fact. Programs offering these professional services will help you gather all the information you need to put your plans into place.

**FIRST – LIST YOUR CONCERNS**

Examples:

- I want to feel safe and cared for at home.
- I want good care, when caregiving becomes too hard on my family.
- I want to stay near my friends and family if I qualify for Medi-Cal.
- I want to be in an assisted living facility.
- I want to leave a legacy and pass my assets to my heirs.

**SECOND – RECAP YOUR FINANCIAL SITUATION**

Examples:

- List your monthly income and expenses
- List your assets
- List the cost of care
- Indicate the sources of money that could pay for your care

**THIRD – DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL PAY FOR CARE NEEDS**

Meet with a financial planner or long term care insurance specialist to make sure you have the proper savings and plans in progress. There are four ways to pay for care.

- Long term care insurance (four types of plans and many companies)
- Pay out-of-pocket
- Medi-Cal
- Combination of 1-3 above

**FOURTH – TEST IT!**

Imagine that you need care today. If your planning went into effect, will it take care of the concerns you listed in Step 1?