

## LEGAL & FINANCIAL ISSUES SURROUNDING ALZHEIMER'S/DEMENTIA

*(Third of a three-part series on Alzheimer's)*

*Disability assistance  
programs available:*

- *Social Security  
Disability Insurance*
- *Supplemental Security  
Income*
- *Medicaid*
- *Medicare*

Legal and financial issues affect everyone, not just those who have a form of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease. Therefore the following recommendations are important for all of us.

First, where are your important financial and legal papers and documents located?

Checkbook

Bank statements

Health, home owner or apartment, and long-term care insurance policies

Car titles and property deeds  
Social security, retirement benefit types of information

Investment portfolio and current statements

Living Wills

Property wills and /or trust information

Conservator information

Planning for the future needs of the individuals involved should be initiated as soon as is feasible to involve all appropriate parties. This is especially important if the disease, Alzheimer's, other type of dementia, or serious medical condition has a potential for progressive decline in mental functioning. By doing this early, the person directly affected by the disease process can be involved to the extent appropriate to the circumstances.

The financial costs of Alzheimer's can be staggering even for in home care. Estimates of costs can be between \$12,000 for in home care up to more than \$75,000 annually for nursing home care. Most insurance policies or Medicare do not cover these expenses. Consider these recommendations from Mayo Clinic's Alzheimer's Disease Center:

✦ **Evaluate your current financial situation, as well as that of the person with Alzheimer's disease.** Review bank account statements, stock and bond certificates, investment state-

ments, real estate deeds, insurance policies, social security information, and other important papers. If you need help with this, review the documents with a trusted family member, friend or attorney.

- ✦ **Try to anticipate the additional expenses you'll encounter as the disease progresses.** These may include ongoing medical treatments, prescription medicines, care services, and consumer products, such as walkers.
- ✦ **Consider hiring a qualified financial adviser, such as a financial planner, accountant, or estate planning attorney.** These professionals can help you manage investments, locate potential income sources, and identify tax deductions.
- ✦ **Talk to the person with Alzheimer's disease about appointing a trusted family member, friend, or professional as his or her durable power of attorney for finances.** This person can make legal and financial decisions for the person if he or she becomes unable to make them.
- ✦ **Learn which insurance and disability assistance programs the person with Alzheimer's disease may be eligible for. There are several possibilities:**
  - ✦ **The Social Security Disability Insurance** program pays cash benefits to people younger than age 65 who can no longer work because they're disabled. To qualify, the person must have worked at least 5 nonconsecutive years in the past 10 years and must submit

doctors' statements and other documents proving that he or she is now unable to work. A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease does not, on its own, establish that someone is disabled.

- ✦ **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** guarantees a minimum monthly income to people aged 65 and older who have a disability and limited income and assets. To be considered disabled, the person with Alzheimer's disease must be proved to be unable to work. For more information, contact the Social Security Administration at **1-800-772-1213**.

- ✦ **Medicaid** is a health insurance program that helps pay doctor and hospital bills for certain low-income and needy people, including some disabled people. Medicaid also covers all or part of nursing home costs. However, a person with Alzheimer's disease can qualify for long-term care only if he or she has minimal income and cash assets. For more information, visit the Health Care Financing Administration Web site: [www.hcfa.gov/medicaidmedicaid.htm](http://www.hcfa.gov/medicaidmedicaid.htm).

**Medicare** is a health insurance plan for people aged 65 and older and some people younger than age 65 with disabilities. It covers inpatient hospital care and a portion of doctor's fees and other medical expenses. Medicare covers some of the services the person with Alzheimer's disease may need but not all of them. If you have questions, contact Medicare at **1-800-633-4227**.

The Alzheimer's Association has several free publications on financial issues at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

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