



Elder Law Guys: Social workers are some of the unsung heroes of eldercare

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The practice of social work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social and economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interaction of all these factors.”

In the area of elder law, we find that a competent social worker (or elder care advocate as we like to refer to them) strives to make quality of life and quality of care their priority.

Once a person enters the healthcare system for more than a routine checkup or procedure, transition is the norm, and not at a slow pace.

An elder care advocate can help the individual and that person’s family navigate through many of these transitions and help ensure that patients are using the benefits and resources to which they are entitled. Part of the advocate’s role is to function as a personal liaison in managing information and resources for the client and family and the various providers and entities with which they are dealing.

Here are just a few examples of issues that families face which can be improved by an elder care advocate’s involvement:

- The patient’s Medicare days are being “cut.” What does that mean? Can that be changed before it happens? Who pays for care afterwards?
- What is the patient’s care plan? Is it being followed? Are there other procedures or treatments that should be considered?
- I’m being discharged soon. What are my needs and my options? How do I choose a long-term care facility? How do I coordinate home care?

— I'm going to be interviewed to apply for homecare services under one of Pennsylvania's waiver programs. How do I best state my need for care assistance to maximize the benefits of this program?

— Should I apply for hospice? Is hospice just for people near the end of life? How can this program benefit me and who pays for it?

Unfortunately, many people become frustrated and overwhelmed when faced with such life changing decisions for care. There are more than 600,000 licensed social workers in the United States. Chances are you will interact with one of them during a healthcare transitional episode.

Avail yourself of the myriad of experience, information and guidance that these valuable advocates can offer.

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