

# Getting It All Organized

By Laura Enslen, LSW

The New Year is a good time for all of us to take some inventory both in our lives and in our homes. Preparing for taxes and cleaning out the old while making room for the new can begin a process of change and organization in our lives. I have personally found myself motivated on these snowy days to make order out of chaos in all areas of my life.

As caregivers, it is also important for us to help the older adults in our lives begin to organize and plan for their future needs and reorganize areas that have become overrun with unnecessary paperwork. Because your loved one may have physical limitations, it may be difficult for them to consider taking on this task. In the midst of all the unnecessary paperwork, we will most likely uncover some much needed paperwork and plans for retirement and beyond. As we lay the groundwork now for the future, we can be better prepared when certain needs arise.

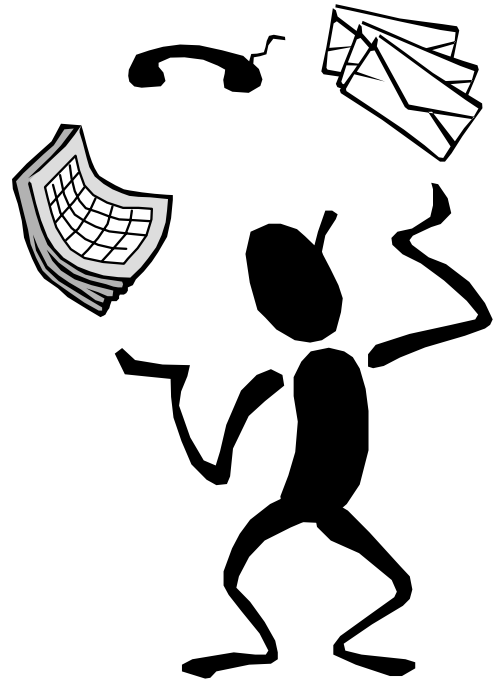
The big question is “Where do we get started?” As discussed often in these articles, we will review the documents that are most important for older adults to have in place as well as information to keep on file in preparing for their future needs. These are files that should be at the forefront and also ones that you, as the caregiver, may want to keep copies of, so you will have them, if needed.

**Advance Directive/Medical Power of Attorney and Living Will** - This document is a must have for everyone, but especially older adults. The advance directive is two -part including both an appointed medical POA and a Living Will. An advance directive can be created with an attorney, but is also available in other forms to complete on your own. The popular Five Wishes form can be ordered from: <http://www.agingwithdignity.org/five-wishes.php>

Pennsylvania's form is available for free at:

[http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/lib/health/publicnotices/Sample\\_Forms\\_for\\_Advance\\_Directives.pdf](http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/lib/health/publicnotices/Sample_Forms_for_Advance_Directives.pdf)

**Power of Attorney** - A POA in its entirety should be created with an attorney, preferably an elder law attorney. Often times when it is completed with an attorney the Advance Directive/Living Will is a part of the document.



**Veteran's Discharge Papers** - This document is important when accessing all benefits from the Veterans Administration and these benefits become increasingly important as one ages. If this form (DD214) cannot be located, you can contact the Veterans Affairs Office for a replacement.

**Local Assisted Living and Retirement Communities** - This information is helpful to keep on hand and continue to update as you continue to learn about these communities. Whether or not you plan to use these facilities, it can be helpful to stay informed. A rehab stay could be needed after a hospitalization or respite care could be used for a week or two during a caregiver's absence for health or vacation plans. Ask others in your network of caregivers about the local facilities and keep information of those you have visited.

**Information on the local Area Agency on Aging** - Each county has a local Area Agency on Aging specifically set up to serve the needs of those 65 and older in their community. Many programs require medical or financial eligibility determined by a case worker, however, many agencies can be a resource for services such as Meals on Wheels, Rent Rebate and heating assistance grants to name a few.

Having all of this information, as well as copies of this information, readily available can ease panic in a crisis as well as increase your loved ones' feelings of independence and involvement in care and future plans, keeping their wishes as a priority.

**For additional information about concerns related to your older relatives,  
contact Quest Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-364-6342.**

**Our services are confidential.**

