

# CLIENT AND FRIEND NEWSLETTER

July 2024

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## **CONTROLLING YOUR FINAL ARRANGEMENTS. BY BETH A MCDANIEL, JD, CELA**

State law provides an 'estate plan' for individuals who die without a Will or revocable living trust. This plan manages the distribution of assets which do not pass by joint ownership or through beneficiary designations. Additionally, state law..

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## **EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT**



This month we feature paralegal Rosemary Sixbey. Rosemary assists clients in the areas of probate and estate planning. She brings with her ten years of experience in the legal field; she connects well with clients and colleagues alike; and she excels in managing the multiple deadlines required by the probate process.

Originally from New York City and Philadelphia, Rosemary currently resides in Renton, Washington, with her husband and teenage son. In her free time, she enjoys taking dance lessons and playing board games with her family. Rosemary can be reached directly via e-mail at [rosemary@bethmcdaniel.com](mailto:rosemary@bethmcdaniel.com) or 425-296-3134.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE WHO LIVE ALONE BY BETH A. MCDANIEL, JD, CELA**



According to US Census data, between 1940 and 2022, the proportion of one-person US households tripled from 7.7% to nearly 30% of all households. Per researchers, approximately 13% of American adults live alone....

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determines who has the authority to arrange for the final disposition of a body if no prior arrangements have been made. Per state law, if there are no prior arrangements the responsibility falls to the following individuals in order of priority:

1. the surviving spouse or state registered domestic partner;
2. the majority of the surviving children;
3. the surviving parents;
4. the majority of the surviving siblings;
5. the court-appointed guardian (if one exists); or,
6. the cemetery or funeral establishment after making a good faith effort to try to locate a lawful decision maker.

Inevitably, the above statutory framework creates complications due to there not being survivors, distance, inaccurate contact information, or estrangement.

Fortunately, since 2019, Washington residents have the ability to control the disposition of their remains through a valid written document executed in front of a witness. This document, known as Directive Regarding Disposition of Remains, allows individuals to appointment an agent (or co-agents) to make the final decisions. In addition, it outlines any prearrangements and specifies preference for burial, cremation, human composting, or aquamation.

This document also details any wishes regarding organ donation and services.

A Directive Regarding Disposition of Remains not only allows you to control what happens to your body after death, but also provides your agent with clear and valuable guidance.

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## CONT: SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE WHO LIVE ALONE BY BETH A. MCDANIEL, JD, CELA

The shift is attributed to numerous factors, including longer life spans and the growing number of adult women in the work force.

Although most (93%) of adults living alone report no or low feelings of depression, there are drawbacks to solo living such as potential delays in receiving assistance during an emergency.

For instance, you might know, or have heard of, someone who remained on the floor for an extended period following a fall. The concern about delays for assistance is not limited to older adults as emergencies can happen to anyone regardless of age. While a working adult's absence might be noticed at a worksite leading to a potential check-in, there is no guarantee that help will arrive immediately, especially if the emergency occurs on the onset of a

weekend. This delay could result in permanent physical damage and loss of independence, which could have been prevented with timely assistance.

It is advisable for those living alone to have someone who is familiar with their routine or to wear a smartwatch or emergency alert pendant.

Since it is unrealistic to wear a charged smart watch or emergency alert device 24/7, it is important to back up methods in place to notify someone if something is potentially wrong.

I often think of my client who fell and was promptly found by a neighbor who noticed that he had not opened his front drapes that morning as was his daily routine.

Unfortunately, not everyone has or

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wants a neighbor attuned to their daily routines. This is where technology can be beneficial. A free phone app called Snug ([snugsafe.com](http://snugsafe.com)) helps ensure safety with a daily check-in feature. Users simply press a daily green check-in button. If a check-in is missed, emergency contacts are notified. The app also offers a paid version for \$9.99 per month or \$99.99 per year, where a representative will call the user, should a check-in be missed, and then an emergency contact, if necessary. If the emergency contact cannot be reached, a Snug representative will alert local authorities to do a wellness check.

There is a similar app called dooinwell ([doinwell.com](http://doinwell.com)). According to their website, this app allows users to schedule one to four daily check ins and register for planned outings. When planning an outing, the user specifies the purposes for leaving

their residence and provides an estimate of their expected return. Upon returning, the user checks-in. To respect privacy, emergency contacts are only notified if a check-in is missed. The app supports voice commands through a Siri-enabled device. Dooinwell is subscription only, costing \$6.49 per month or \$52.99 annually, with a two-month free trial.

Another useful device should you, or someone on your behalf, call 911, is a key lockbox accessible only to first responders (for example, [KnoxBox.com/HomeBox](http://KnoxBox.com/HomeBox)). This prevents potential damage from first responders trying to gain entry to your residence. When researching key lockboxes, websites like KnoxBox require you to enter the name of your local fire department that services your area to confirm they can access the specific box you are considering.

In conclusion, while it is entirely..

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feasible to lead a rich, full life while living alone, it is crucial to take proactive steps, regardless of age, to best assure prompt assistance during an emergency.

If you know someone who lives alone, please encourage them to implement These protective safety measures.

Additionally, remain vigilant for any

deviations to that person's routine or signs of lack of responsiveness. If you have concerns, do not hesitate to call 911 and request a wellness check. This simple action could provide peace of mind or even save a life.

If have questions or wish to make an appointment, please contact our client care coordinator, Margo Passeau, at (425) 296-3121 or [margo@bethmcdaniel.com](mailto:margo@bethmcdaniel.com).

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Disclaimer: this newsletter is informational only and should not be construed as legal advice.