

Special Needs Alliance lawyers focus on those with special needs: TCPalm.com

By ALLAN APPEL
Disabilities columnist
Tuesday, June 26, 2007

Special needs require attention. Focusing on that attention is a nationwide group of lawyers called the Special Needs Alliance that consists of independent attorneys who specialize in the areas of disability and public benefits. Their clients include those permanently injured as a result of personal injury or medical malpractice. The scope of services includes financial security for special-needs children. Examples of their services include obtaining Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid/Medicare. Other types of benefits may also apply to specific situations, such as Section 8 housing, veterans' benefits, Workers' Compensation, qualifying for vocational training programs, food stamps, and numerous other state and local programs.

These lawyers can prepare trust accountings for a court or supervise trust distributions to protect eligibility for public benefit programs. The network can be used to gain access to nationally recognized investment advisers. SNA lawyers can assist in selecting financial advisers or help create parameters for appointing trustees for those with special needs. SNA lawyers also are concerned with protecting eligibility for public benefit programs by establishing special-needs trusts and wills. They are involved, too, in the overall estate planning of their clients with disabilities. These areas may include drafting living trusts, or establishing guardianships or conservatorships. Another key area is devising structuring settlements as a result of a personal injury or medical malpractice matter.

The overall goal of this group is to maximize the best quality of life for clients with disabilities and their families. One of the challenges to that goal involves the growth in the number of people affected by Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer's Association tells us more than 5 million Americans live with this disease. By 2050, the association estimates 11 million to 16 million people age 65 and older will be afflicted with Alzheimer's. The ripple effect of Alzheimer's touches the lives of millions more family members, caregivers and health care professionals. This challenge further spotlights the need for the legal and financial services offered by SNA lawyers.

You can access the SNA Web site at: <http://www.specialneedsalliance.com>. From that site, you can obtain the names of its members in all 50 states from its pull down menu. Or you can call SNA toll-free at (877) 572-8472.

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