

# Senior Outlook Today

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## The 3 Conversations You Should Have with Your Aging Parents

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By Jim Speir

### Do your parents have an Estate Plan?

As we and our parents' age, it is essential to initiate a conversation or a series of conversations to discuss matters important to them and you. In my experience, this is easier said than done. People are living longer. One out of every two adults over age 65 will require some form of long term care. Unfortunately, many folks have done little to no planning. This is why we need to initiate a conversation about our parents' wishes.

Do they have a Will or a Revocable Living Trust that outlining who will receive their property upon death and who will execute their wishes?

Who is the executor of their Will or Successor Trustee of their Trust? Who is Mom and Dad's Durable Power of Attorney for financial and health (Patient Advocate) matters in the event Mom or Dad become incapacitated and can't make financial or medical decisions for themselves. For example, what happens if Mom has a stroke and is incapacitated and does not have Patient Advocate or Financial Power of Attorney documents drawn up? Someone would have to petition probate to become her conservator to make financial decisions and to become her guardian to make medical decisions on her behalf. During a time of crisis, this process is consuming and stressful. However, it is completely avoidable by planning ahead.

Lastly, ask your parents where their Will, Trust and other legal documents are kept in the event you need to access them on their behalf. Initiating this discussion about your parents Estate Plan will do the following: If no plans are in place, this can be a call to action. This conversation can lead into the financial questions and their wishes for future care, if needed.

### What is your parent's financial situation?

Talking about money is uncomfortable. From my experience most children are reluctant to ask their parents and parents are reluctant to provide the information. There is no need to know every detail, but it is important to gain a general sense of their finances and insurance to pay for future care.

How do they plan to pay for Long Term Care out of their pocket? Medicare or their supplemental plan will not pay for Long Term Care.

Do they have Long Term Care Insurance? If so, what kind of care will it cover and what are the monthly benefits? Or, do they have a life insurance policy that has living benefits to pay for Long Term Care? They may or may not know this themselves.

This is an opportunity to pull the policies out and review them with their financial and/or insurance professional.

Lastly, do Mom and Dad have an inventory of their assets and insurance policies? If so, where do they keep them in the event you have to provide assistance?

### What are your parents Long Term Care wishes?

Parents and adult children do not want to think about, let alone talk about, declining health or death. Imagine for example, Mom's health declines due to dementia, and we do not know what her wishes are, whether or not she has a Financial Power of Attorney or Patient Advocate in place, and no idea what her finances are, where they are, and how to access them. In addition, you may not know her doctors, lawyer, and/or financial professional. These are all people who could help. What a nightmare!

It is important to find out what your parents' wishes are for care if their health declines. Discuss how care will be paid for and who the professionals are in their life that can help.



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In my financial planning practice there comes a time I have a conversation with my older adult clients. I suggest we meet with their children or the named successor trustee, Power of Attorney and Patient Advocate for the following reasons:

- Discuss where we are financially and where we are headed.
- Discuss Estate Planning in place.
- Discuss care options and the plans in place to pay for care.

All this information is rarely gathered in one discussion. That is why you need to keep the conversation ongoing. It takes time, openness and patience. As long as the focus remains on carrying out your parents' wishes, we will always head in the right direction.