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A program of Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

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## **How to Get Help for Seniors - HELP4TN Blog**

By the year 2060, approximately one-fourth of America's population will be 65 and older.<sup>[1]</sup> As the number of seniors increases, so does the need for legal services that help seniors with solving problems, such as accessing benefits and healthcare, obtaining and maintaining safe and secure housing, avoiding or escaping abuse and exploitation, and engaging in important estate planning activities. Elder law is especially unique because a senior with a legal problem in one area (i.e. housing, healthcare, estate planning) usually stems from or overlaps in other legal areas. For example, when a senior is struggling to access benefits, this may cause them difficulties with getting proper healthcare, which will result in them paying out of pocket for medications and treatments. Paying out of pocket for expenses that used to be covered by other sources may cause a financial strain, resulting in the inability to afford safe housing, food, utilities, and other basic living expenses.

Many lawyers tailor their practice in one or a few practice areas, but in order to meet the unique needs many seniors face, an elder law practitioner must understand many practice areas and how they work together to provide seniors with proper legal representation. As a result of the growing need for elder law services, elder law has emerged as a unique practice area, focusing on the holistic legal needs of seniors.

Elder law issues can range from obtaining access to government benefits, such as Social Security or Supplemental Security Income, TennCare benefits, or Veteran benefits, to helping seniors plan ahead by creating wills, trusts, powers of attorney, and advanced healthcare directives. Other elder law practices include helping seniors who have been financially or physically abused or exploited, providing representation to seniors seeking custody of or visitation with their grandchildren, protecting personal property when faced with lawsuits, recovering from or avoiding scams, managing debt, and more.

The main goal of elder law is to aid seniors with living safely, securely, and independently for as long as possible and ensuring their wishes will be respected if independent living is no longer feasible. As a result, the expanding practice area of elder law has become an all-inclusive area of the law that seeks to meet the needs of the client rather than just focusing on the single, present problem.

To learn more about legal rights for seniors, click here to access our senior law page.

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