



Seniors concerned about their safety and their rights during COVID-19 can rest assured that LAS is rising to the challenge and adapting to change.

The majority of LAS and HICAP clients are older adults that often have significant barriers in accessing needed support and services. In the age of COVID-19, the home visits that our attorneys once provided have been replaced by telephone interviews and email. HICAP (Medicare) counseling appointments are also being conducted by telephone with frequent email follow-up. Community education events that took place at locations throughout the County have been substituted with Zoom and GoToWebinar trainings. The in-person court appearances that LAS made on behalf of elder abuse victims have been altered to enable appearances in multiple venues through use of on-line technology.

None of these methods are ideal, but they permit LAS to continue to provide indispensable services to our communities in Alameda County. LAS and its dedicated team of community-builders plow through these pandemic-era obstacles to honor its mission and ensure the rights, independence and dignity

of older adults.

Sometimes it is the simplest things that are the most challenging. When words of encouragement come over the phone instead of with a handshake and smile, personal connection is diminished. When community events are broadcast through a monitor rather than with individuals who are armed with both information and empathy, relationships are not as strong. When court appearances are done remotely and the judge, client, witnesses and attorneys do not meet in person, our community's network is not maintained in the same way.

Not all of LAS' services have become remote. Some individuals need the encouragement that only human presence can bring. LAS continues to provide case management services for older adults who are verging on homelessness or who are already homeless. For these clients, immediate in-person services are the only way they may receive the help they need. LAS undertakes many precautionary measures to protect the health of our case worker, but these visits continue when no other option remains.

We have learned. We have persevered. We have adapted. LAS has become more flexible in order to provide the services we must. LAS's employees and the HICAP Volunteer Counselors have collaborated with one another to ensure connection with our community through as many outlets as possible. LAS prioritizes the health of our community for its safety.

LAS remains ready, prepared and as responsive as ever to support those who need us most. To the older adults in our community, and to those who work to uplift them each and every day, we remain ready to assist you. And when this health crisis ends one day as it surely must, we will be the first to say to you in person, "Welcome, how can we help you?"

—James Treggiari, Executive Director, Legal Assistance for Seniors



Legal Assistance for Seniors' Elder Abuse Webinar Coming Soon

Legal Assistance for Seniors would like to invite you to attend its Fall Webinar Series on Elder Abuse, brought to you in partnership with Golden Gate University. Open to the public and free of charge, LAS is producing this webinar series to help seniors—and those who represent them and their interests—to better understand the world amidst the backdrop of COVID-19.

To reserve your space for the webinar, please visit LAS' EventBrite webpage.

Register on EventBrite





LAS would like to thank Golden Gate University for co-hosting the webinar series and providing technical assistance and support, as well as the Institute on Aging (IOA) for their sponsorship of education credits. LAS would also like to give special thanks to our two chief sponsors, Michael Stephens with Highland Partners, providing probate, estate and trust realty services, and Phillip Campbell of Campbell Green, LLP, trust and estate lawyers.

Should you wish to find more information about the program, presenters, continuing education credits and sponsors, please visit our LAS events page:

<https://www.lashicap.org/events/elder-abuse-webinar/>

NEED HELP?

Understanding Medicare benefits and COVID-19?

With eliminating Medi-Cal share of cost?

Are you "new" to Medicare?

The **Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)** is still here to help. While practicing social distancing measures to ensure your safety we are still only a phone call away.

All it takes is a phone call. Appointments are now being conducted over the phone, which means that you don't even have to leave the comfort of your home, while still receiving the quality service that you need from your local

HICAP. We know these are difficult times. We are here to help and answer any questions you may have.

Services provided:

- Explanation of Medicare benefits and supplemental coverage options
- Part D Plan comparisons and enrollment
- Medi-Cal Share of Cost issues for dual-eligible beneficiaries
- Low Income Subsidy/Extra Help application assistance
- And information for Medicare Open Enrollment Period, which begins October 15 and runs through December 7.

Schedule your appointment with one of our trained and registered HICAP Counselors.

CALL US at 800-434-0222

**To directly contact Alameda County HICAP, please call 510-839-0393
or 1-800-393-0363.**

Do NOT share your Medicare number with strangers.

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Sucess Stories
Rose Ellis, Berkeley, CA

Keeping her family together was Berkeley resident Rose Ellis' priority. When Rose's nephew, 11 year-old Luke Osuna, accidentally injured himself, requiring days of in-patient hospitalization at St. Francis Memorial Hospital's burn ward in San Francisco, she knew that matters had become dire. Luke had already been diagnosed with autism, and his need for increased supervision at home was growing. His father had passed away and his mother, Rose's sister, was living with advanced multiple sclerosis and in a skilled nursing facility. This presented a challenging scenario for Rose who had just started a new job and was facing the possibility that the Department of Children & Family Services would have to place Luke in foster care.

Not knowing precisely where to turn, Rose found a non-profit agency in Oakland called Legal Assistance for Seniors while doing research online. She didn't know it at the time, but LAS turned out to be the "light at the end of the tunnel" she had been hoping for.

Working to keep her small family together, and with few resources at her disposal, Rose decided to apply for guardianship with the help of LAS. Not only was Alameda County requiring action for the protection of Luke's health and safety, but a whole host of other issues needed attention, as well. Even getting Luke to the dentist was made more difficult because Rose was not his legal guardian.

Mariel Kusano, an LAS Supervising Attorney began working with Rose straight away on an application to the Court. Mariel was able to help Rose at every stage of the process, preparing her for the hearing and representing Rose before the judge. In November of 2019, Rose Ellis was legally granted guardianship of Luke Osuna.

As explained by the attorneys at LAS, guardians agree to step into the role of the child's parent until the child turns 18. They have already been raising the child before they ever file for guardianship and they continue to do all the work of parenting long after the judge signs the order. The goal for LAS is to help make the court process a little easier for clients. LAS helps them through this small part of their family's journey so that they may continue caring for that child with full legal authority.

Just months later, Rose realized her sister's other son, James, age 15, was facing challenges of his own. James was navigating the shelter-in-place requirements of COVID-

19 as many other teenagers were, but with the added difficulties of Asperger Syndrome along with clinically diagnosed depression. The situation was strikingly similar to that of Luke's. This time, Rose sought guardianship of James along with her mother, 90 year-old Hosanna Kitzenberger, and with the expertise of Legal Assistance for Seniors. Working once more with Mariel, Rose and Hosanna applied for guardianship of James. Together, they navigated the court process during the pandemic, participating in a remote investigation with a video home visit and appearing before a judge through use of an online communication platform, without being physically present at the courthouse. Good news soon followed. Rose and Hosanna were able to keep their family together again and had been granted guardianship of James.

Speaking of her experiences, Rose shared that "a more profound gift could not have been given to her and her family" than the assistance she had been given from LAS to keep her family together. Not only was it a tumultuous time for Rose, but living on a fixed income and dealing with the stresses of a pandemic were hurdles she faced on top of the emotional ones she was experiencing while trying to keep Luke and James safe. Legal Assistance for Seniors helped her manage the process, represented her in a major life matter, and brought about the result Rose most hoped for: a family together once more.

LAS would like to thank Rose Ellis for allowing us to share her story with the community.

Your Support of LAS Helps Us Serve the Communities of Alameda County

Your support of Legal Assistance for Seniors helps us to fulfill our mission to ensure the independence and dignity of seniors.

<https://www.lashicap.org/donate/>

At LAS, we welcome volunteers, whether for our legal or HICAP programs, or in development and administration. Should you be interested in sharing your time and talent with LAS, please contact us:

<https://www.lashicap.org/donate/volunteer/>

None of our work would be possible without the generous support of people like you.
Thanks for all that you do to ensure our ability to help seniors in need.

