

ELDER LAW COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED BY: Andrew G. Sykes

2007-2008 REPORT TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This is a report to the Executive Director of the Allegheny County Bar Association summarizing the activities and achievements of the Committee for the past year, and plans for 2008-2009.

2007-2008 ACTIVITIES:

The Committee met on a monthly basis to discuss areas of concern, and recent legal developments, affecting the practice of elder law in Allegheny County. This year, the Committee held a series of discussions regarding a number of timely topics, including: (1) the position of the Catholic Church regarding living wills in light of recent pronouncements and a widely disseminated mailing from the Catholic Bishops of Pennsylvania; (2) new regulations concerning long term care partnership policies in Pennsylvania, and their effect on the sale of long term care insurance policies to the elderly; and (3) the closing of Mayview Hospital and its likely effect on Western Pennsylvania.

The Committee appointed a new sub-committee, chaired by Attorney Jay Fingeret, on the topic of health and humanitarian concerns. The sub-committee met, and reported back to the full committee, on its goals and preliminary activities.

In October, 2007, the Committee hosted a lunch with the Orphans' Court judges, including Judge Lucchino and Judge Mazur. The Committee also heard presentations from a number of informative speakers: Don Grant, of the Adult Protective Services program of the Area Agency on Aging; Ann Begler, Esq. and Rick Rogow, Esq., on mediation of disputes; Oliver Schmidt, of Residential Resources, Inc., on providing accessible housing solutions to the elder and people with disabilities; Daniel Buzard, Esq., who now heads the Guardianship Department at the Orphans' Court of Allegheny County; Chad Shannon, Esq., and Robert Daley, Esq., on personal injury litigation on behalf of nursing home residents; and Jim Osborn, of Carnegie Mellon University, on the use of adaptive technology to assist the elderly.

2008 - 2009 PLANS:

Thomas Dempsey, Jr. will chair the Committee for the coming year.

The sub-committee on Health and Humanitarian Concerns will continue to meet, and is expected to prepare a report to the full Committee on its findings and recommendations.

The Committee plans once again to host a luncheon with the Orphans' Court Judges, with invitations sent to all sitting judges, including the recently appointed Judge O'Toole.

In addition to several business meetings, the Committee plans to continue hearing from speakers on timely topics, including the following: David Jones, Department of Public Welfare Director, on the closing of Mayview Hospital; Sylvia Denys, Esq., on the use of service animals to assist the elderly and disabled; and Judith Black, M.D., on physicians' orders for life sustaining treatment in Pennsylvania.

ANDREW G. SYKES
Outgoing Committee Chair