

**A Guide to the Elder Law and Special Needs Section  
of the New York State Bar Association**

**COMMITTEE DESCRIPTIONS**

**Client and Consumer Issues Committee**

Description: Our Committee reviews and edits informational pamphlets that are produced by the New York State Bar Association in conjunction with the Elder Law and Special Needs Section. These pamphlets include 17 Benefits for Older New Yorkers and legalease pamphlets. We also review and edit the speaker script for the Mitchell Rabbino Decision Making Day.

Chair: Linda A. Redlinsky, Esq., Rafferty & Redlisky, LLP, 438 Fifth Avenue, 1st Floor, Pelham, NY 10803, (914) 696-0006, redlisky@randrlegal.com.

Meeting Times: 2017 Fall Meeting, Tarrytown

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**Diversity Committee**

Description: The Diversity Committee actively recruits new members to our Section and our Committee from diverse backgrounds from the Bar and from law schools throughout the State. We are committed to expanding the number of speakers with diverse backgrounds at our events and highlighting the skills and personal achievements of more attorneys of diverse backgrounds at our meetings and in our Section's publication. By truly incorporating diversity, this Committee hopes to promote mutual respect and make possible the full, effective use of the talents and abilities of all and to ensure that the composition of the Section and its leadership reflects the diversity of our State.

Chair: Veronica Escobar, Esq., The Law Offices of Veronica Escobar, 118-35 Queens Boulevard, STE 1220, Forest Hills, New York 11375, (347) 766-4627, vescobar@veronicaescobarlaw.com.

Meeting Times: We will meet at the Annual Summer Meeting and the Fall Meeting, as well as hold a telephone conference in the Winter and Spring, specific times to be determined.

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**Elder Abuse Committee**

Description: The Elder Abuse Committee's mission is to raise awareness within the New York State legal community about issues of exploitation and mistreatment of older adults. Elder abuse is a widespread, growing problem and attorneys are effectively positioned to serve as watchdogs in identifying, addressing and remedying incidents of elder abuse within their pool of clients and potential clients. Through substantive educational programming, resource creation and distribution, and community building, the committee's goal is to increase legal practitioners' proactive and informed responses to elder abuse.

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Co-Chairs: Deborah S. Ball, Esq., Law Offices of Deborah S. Ball, 880 Third Avenue, 13th Floor, New York, NY, 10022, (212) 752-3380, dball@ballnyelderlaw.com and Juli Stoil Fernandez, Esq., Finkel & Fernandez LLP, 16 Court St., STE.1007, Brooklyn, NY 11241-1010, (347) 296-8200, jstoilfernandez@ffelderlaw.com.

Meeting Times: The Committee will hold an in-person meeting at the Fall Meeting.

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**Estates, Trusts and Tax Issues Committee**

Description: The Estates, Trusts and Tax Issues Committee dedicates its time to reviewing current and emerging issues in estate and trust administration as well as the recent changes to the federal and New York State estate tax rules. The Committee Chairs present quarterly conference calls with Committee members discussing interesting legal concepts (lunch-and-learns).

Co-Chairs: Judith Nolfo, McKenna, Esq., Law Offices of Judith Nolfo McKenna, 1659 Central Avenue, STE 104, Albany, NY 12205-4039, (518) 618-0598, judy@mckennalawny.com and Patricia Powis, Esq., The Law Office of Patricia A. Powis, 600 Old Country Road, STE 530, Garden City, NY 11530, (516) 240-5180, patricia@powislaw.com.

Meeting Times: In person meetings will be held at the Annual, Spring Summerf and Fall meetings of the Section. Conference call (lunch-and-learn) meetings will occur four times a year.

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**Ethics Committee**

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**Financial Planning and Investments Committee**

Description: The Financial Planning and Investments Committee of the Elder Law and Special Needs Section promotes the financial literacy of our Section members. The Committee believes that our clients greatly benefit from a holistic approach to counseling that crosses over multiple disciplines. In order to properly coordinate efforts, attorneys must be familiar with issues and solutions recommended by financial service professionals. Through articles and presentations, the Committee continues to identify these financial issues and to educate our members.

Chair: Amy L. Earing, Esq., Lavelle & Finn, LLP, 29 British American Boulevard, Latham, NY 12110-1405, (518) 869-6227, amy@lavelleandfinn.com.

Meeting Times: 2017 Fall Meeting, Tarrytown

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**Guardianship Committee**

Description: The goal of the Guardianship Committee is to keep the Section apprised of important issues facing guardianship practitioners in the areas of Mental Hygiene Law Article 81 and to work towards the betterment of a system serving disabled individuals and their families. Our focus this year will be to improve the Article 81 guardianship system by pursuing the implementation of a uniform statewide system of procedures and forms and exploring and educating ourselves about the possibility of specialized guardianship parts. We will also continue to seek to improve the Part 36 compensation structure implemented through the Office of Court Administration that impacts all practitioners acting as Guardians, Trustees, Court Appointed Attorneys and Court Evaluators.

Co-Chairs: Patricia A. Bave, Esq., Kommer Bave & Ollman, LLP, 145 Huguenot Street, Suite 402, New Rochelle, NY 10810, (914) 633-7400, pbave@kboattorneys.com and Robin N. Goeman, Esq., 26 Court Street, STE 913, Brooklyn, NY 11242, (718) 866-5373, robin@goemanlaw.com

Meeting Times: We plan to hold committee meetings at the Summer Meeting, and the Annual Meeting, January, 2017 and two to four additional phone meetings which dates will be decided upon.

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**Health Care Issues Committee**

Description: The Health Care Law Committee keeps the Section advised of any current changes in health care delivery, regulation and law, and we identify upcoming issues that may impact our clients. We advocate on proposed legislation surrounding health care matters, and educate attorneys and other health care professionals on issues relevant to our members and their clients. We work with the Health Law Section of the Bar Association as needed, and often collaborate with non-legal professionals on any matter involving the Public Health Law and public funding for health care.

Co-Chairs: Deborah A. Slezak, Esq., Cioffi Slezak Wildgrube P.C., 1473 Erie Boulevard, 1st Floor, Schenectady, NY 12305, (518) 377-6700, dslezak@cswlawfirm.com and Glenn J. Witecki, Esq., Witecki Law Office, 8 South Church Street, Schenectady, NY 12305-1734, (518) 372-2827, witeckilawoffice@aol.com.

Meeting Times: TBA

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**Legal Education Committee (\*restricted membership)**

Description: The Legal Education Committee of the Elder Law and Special Needs Section is comprised of our immediate past chair, and the prior immediate past chair. Together, these seasoned leaders assist our Section in selecting the collaborative continuing legal education seminars that will be offered through NYSBA's Legal Education department. These Co-Chairs

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then select the over-all program chair for the various CLE programs to be offered in the calendar year, and work with the over-all program chair to select local site chairs and secure authors. This Committee of two welcomes suggestions from the Section Membership on relevant topics, innovative programs, and speaker suggestions.

Co-Chairs: JulieAnn Calareso., Burke & Casserly, P.C., 225 Washington Ave Extension, Suite 104, Albany, NY 12205, (518) 452-1961, jcalareso@burkecasserly.com and David Goldfarb, Esq., Goldfarb Abrandt Salsman & Kutzin LLP, 360 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4310, New York, NY 10118-1100, (212) 387-8400, goldfarb@seniorlaw.com

Meeting Times: None; Immediate Past Chair and Prior Immediate Past Chair coordinate calls as needed with over-all and site chairs for various continuing legal education presentations.

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### **Legislation Committee**

Description: This Committee advocates for and against legislative action for the overall benefit of our clients and our members. We do this by working closely with our Section's lobbyists in tracking any relevant proposed legislation. We also do this by holding either monthly conference calls or meetings among our Committee members to discuss issues that are or could be problematic to our clients and to our members and work toward proposing legislation that can address these issues. We are always looking for new members as it is important for us to have feedback from as many members as possible regarding any issues that may be affecting our clients or our members that may necessitate legislative action.

Co-Chairs: Jeffrey A. Asher, Esq., Law Offices of Jeffrey A. Asher, PLLC, 43 West 43rd Street, Suite 72, New York, NY 10036, (212) 951-0553, jasher@asherlawfirm.com and Deepankar Mukerji, Esq., Keane & Beane, PC, 445 Hamilton Ave., 15th Floor, White Plains, NY 10601, (914) 946-4777 x353, dmukerji@kblaw.com.

Meeting Times: Monthly phone conferences on the first Tuesday of the month at 9am, plus in person meetings at the Summer, Fall and Annual meetings.

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### **Mediation Committee**

Description: The Mediation Committee works to educate elder law and special needs attorneys about mediation, its benefits and enhancement to their practices, and their role in mediation as an advocate for their clients. Our Committee strives to to educate the consumer about mediation and its benefits in resolution of elder care, estate contests and special needs contests, prior to or during a court proceeding, and hopes to implement a state-wide local judicial initiative introducing mediation in contested probate and guardianship proceedings under MHL Article 81, SCPA 17 and SCPA 17A.

Chair: Irene V. Villacci, Esq., Irene V. Villacci, Esq., P.C., 74 North Village Avenue, Rockville Centre, NY 11570-4606, (516) 280-1339, irene@ivelderlaw.com.

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Meeting Times: 2017 Fall Meeting, Tarrytown

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**Medicaid Committee**

Description: The Medicaid Committee monitors changes in law, regulation and policy concerning Medicaid on a federal, state and local level, educates members on these changes, recommends positions for the Section to take on changes in law, regulation and policy, and takes action on these positions through administrative and legislative advocacy. During the annual NYS budget process, the Committee works closely with the Legislation Committee of the Section to develop a Section position on the budget and engage in legislative advocacy.

Co-Chairs: Michael D. Dezik, Esq., Wilcenski & Pleat PLLC, 11 South Street, STE 202, Glens Falls, NY 12801, (518) 409-8534, mdezik@wplawny.com and Kim F. Trigoboff, Esq., 67-123 Dartmouth Street, Forest Hills, NY 11375, (646) 308-1747, kimtrigoboff@gmail.com

Meeting Times: We have annual, Summer and Fall meetings, plus phone conferences to be scheduled by phone in the Spring. We will seek to arrange a call-in for those not attending the Fall meeting.

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**Membership Services Committee**

Description: The Membership Committee of the Elder Law Section exists to foster membership development and retention for the Section by focusing on member needs and creating best practices for attracting new members. In so doing, the Committee will make recommendations and create initiatives to further these goals. The Committee will look to the membership programs of the Association and utilize Association resources for the further enhancement of Section membership. It will also look at methods of increasing awareness of Section member benefits amongst both members and non-members as an integral part of development and retention. The Committee will work to involve the Section leadership and Executive Committee, Section membership generally, and external groups within the Association to further its goals.

Co-Chairs: James R. Barnes, Esq., Burke & Casserly, P.C., 255 Washington Avenue Extension, Albany, NY 12205 (518) 452-1961, jrbarnes@burkecasserly.com and Amy L. Earing, Esq., Lavelle & Finn, LLP, 29 British American Boulevard, Latham, NY 12110-1405, (518) 869-0572, amy@lavelleandfinn.com

Meeting Times: The Committee plans to hold two meetings, one in the Summer Meeting and the other at the Annual Meeting. At this time, phone conferences will be scheduled in late September/early October, another in late November/early December, and one follow up call in January prior to the Annual Meeting.

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### **Mental Health Committee**

Description: The Mental Health Committee focuses on mental health legal issues that arise in the context of the representation of the elderly and special needs population. Quite often, the clients that we serve may suffer from some form of mental illness, or have a loved one who does, and there are a myriad of issues that may need to be addressed in the scope of our representation. For example, how do we assist our clients in obtaining treatment or hospitalization for a loved one or themselves? What rights do our clients have to refuse treatment on their own behalf or for others? Is an Article 81 guardianship appropriate/effective for someone who has a mental illness? Do the Courts effectively address mental health issues in Article 81 proceedings? What housing options exist? How, if at all, do mental health care benefits differ from other health care benefits? What legislative initiatives will benefit this population? These are all topics that we have discussed and continue to explore.

Chair: Moira Schneider Laidlaw, Esq., Shamberg Marwell Hollis Andreycaak & Laidlaw, P.C., 55 Smith Avenue, Mount Kisco, NY 10549-2813, (914) 666-5600, mlaidlaw@smhal.com

Meeting Times: We will be scheduling committee meetings for the Fall Section meeting in October and the January Section meeting.

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### **Mentoring Committee**

Description: The Mentoring Committee's main focus is to provide mentoring opportunities for its members as a membership benefit. One such initiative has been the Elder Law Mentoring Program that the Committee has offered each year since 2012. The Program pairs experienced Elder Law attorneys with those who are new to the practice of Elder Law for a one-on-one mentoring relationship. In order to qualify for the program, you must be a member of the NYSBA Elder Law and Special Needs Section and attend at least two section meetings per year, either in person or by phone.

Chair: Richard A. Weinblatt, Esq., Haley, Weinblatt & Calcagni, LLP, One Suffolk Square, 1601 Veterans Memorial Highway, STE 425, Islandia, NY 11749, (631) 582-5151, raw@hwclaw.com.

Co-Vice Chairs: Neil T. Rimsky, Esq., Cuddy & Feder, LLP., 445 Hamilton Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor, White Plains, New York 10601-5105, nrimsky@cuddyfeder.com; Deborah A. Slezak, Esq., Cioffi Slezak Wildgrube PC, 1473 Erie Boulevard, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Schenectady, New York 12305, dslezak@cswlawfirm.com

Meeting Times: Applications for our one-on-one mentoring program usually become available in the fall and we try to have everyone paired up by mid-February, as that is the busiest time of the year for our committee and a time during which we have most of our conference calls and meetings. We anticipate meeting numerous times through the year.

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### **Practice Management Committee**

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Description: To share best practices for operating a law office focused on elder law and special needs planning, including increasing efficiencies, effectiveness, and utilizing technology and other resources.

Chair: Anne E. Dello-Iacono, Esq., The Dello-Iacono Law Group, P.C., 105 Maxess Road, STE 205, Melville, NY 11747, (631) 861-3001, anne@dellolaw.com

Meeting: 2017 Fall Meeting, Tarrytown

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### **Publications Committee**

Description: The Publications Committee is responsible for producing the Elder Law and Special Needs Law Journal (the Journal) four times each year. We request articles from Section members, and field requests for articles on current and relevant topics for our Section members. The Publications Committee works with the authors writing the articles, reviews and edits the submissions, and publishes the submission, usually in the next Journal. The Publications Committee is always seeking energetic, articulate members to assist us with editing submissions, encouraging members to write articles, submit photographs from Section meetings, and provide other updates of interest for our members. There is a place on this Committee for everyone, both newer and seasoned members of the Section.

Co-Chairs: Judith Nolfo McKenna, Esq., Law Office of Judith Nolfo McKenna, 1659 Central Avenue, Suite 104, Albany, NY 12205-4039, (518) 618-0598, judy@mckennalawny.com; Tara Anne Pleat, Esq., Wilcenski & Pleat PLLC, 5 Emma Lane, Clifton Park, NY 12065, (518) 881-1621, TPleat@WPLawNY.com.

Meeting Times: Occasional phone conferences, but predominantly through independent work via email directly in contact with our Co-Editors.

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### **Real Estate & Housing Committee**

Description: The Real Estate and Housing Committee focuses on the myriad of issues of housing for seniors and the disabled. As part of this mission we want to educate the Bar and consumers on the current state of the law on housing issues as well as new options and opportunities for congregate care.

Chair: Jeffrey G. Abrandt, Esq., Goldfarb Abrandt Salzman & Kutzin LLP, 350 5th Avenue, Suite 4310, New York, NY 10118-1190, (212) 387-8400, abrandt@seniorlaw.com.

Meeting Times: 2017 Fall Meeting, Tarrytown

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### **Special Education Committee**

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Description: The Special Education Committee provides information to the Section members on topics including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and how the practice of special education law interrelates with elder law and special needs planning. Our mission is to provide a resource to the membership and educate it on the importance of providing appropriate special education services to students with disabilities and support to the families of children with disabilities. The Committee intends to also provide guidance on special education regulations to members of the Section via teleconference and in-person meetings, CLE's, articles in the Journal and other initiatives including pro-bono clinics and presentations.

Chair: Tracey Spencer Walsh, Esq., Tracey Spencer Walsh, Esq., 379 West Broadway, New York, NY 10012, (212) 401-1959, tracey@spencerwalshlaw.com.

Meeting Times: TBD

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**Special Education Committee**

Description: The Special Education Committee provides information to the Section members on topics including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and how the practice of special education law interrelates with elder law and special needs planning. Our mission is to provide a resource to the membership and educate it on the importance of providing appropriate special education services to students with disabilities and support to the families of children with disabilities. The Committee intends to also provide guidance on special education regulations to members of the Section via teleconference and in-person meetings, CLE's, articles in the Journal and other initiatives including pro-bono clinics and presentations.

Chair: Tracey Spencer Walsh, Esq., Tracey Spencer Walsh, Esq., 379 West Broadway, New York, NY 10012, (212) 401-1959, tracey@spencerwalshlaw.com.

Meeting Times: TBD

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**Special Needs Planning Committee**

Description: The Committee addresses issues related to individuals with special needs including developmental disabilities, mental illness or physical limitations. We also address legislation, advocacy, guardianship, supplemental needs trusts as well as residential and other programmatic services.

Co-Chairs: Adrienne J. Arkontaky, Esq., The Cuddy Law Firm, 50 Main Street, White Plains, NY, 10106, (914) 984-2741, aarkontaky@cuddylawfirm.com  
Joan Lensky Robert, Esq. Kassoff, Robert & Lerner, LLP, 100 Merrick Road, Suite 508W, Rockville Centre, NY 11570, joanlenrob@aol.com



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Vice Chairs: Lisa K. Friedman, Esq., Law Office of Lisa K. Friedman, 880 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022, (212) 953-1200, lf@lisafriedmanlaw.com.

Frances J. Pantaleo, Esq., Bleakley Platt & Schmidt LLP, One North Lexington Avenue, White Plains, NY 10601, fpantaleo@bpslaw.com

Meeting Times: We will meet four times during the year at the Section meetings. In addition, we meet on the first Thursday of every month via telephone at 4pm (when this does not fall on a Section meeting month).

To send an email to the full committee via their online Community, click here: [nysba-specialneeds@connectedcommunity.org](mailto:nysba-specialneeds@connectedcommunity.org)

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### **Sponsorship Committee**

Description: The Sponsorship Committee works to obtain sponsors and/or exhibitors for the Section's meetings. Our Committee works to obtain as many sponsors as possible in order to provide funding for the Elder Law and Special Needs Section in general, and to further fund Section events and meetings.

Chair: Elizabeth Briand, Esq., Bleakley Platt & Schmidt LLP, One North Lexington Avenue, White Plains, NY 10601 (914) 287-6190, ebriand@bpslaw.com.

Meeting Times: We plan to meet in person at the Fall (Tarrytown) meeting this year.

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### **Technology Committee**

Description: The purpose of the Technology Committee will be to ensure the dissemination of and access to information of benefit to (1) the membership of the Elder Law and Special Needs Section; (2) all of the Committees of the Elder Law and Special Needs Section; and (3) the general public. To this end, the Technology Committee will be focusing on the content available on the Section's Bar Association website to make sure it is meeting member needs and is up to date with respect to any information available to the Committees and the general public. The purpose of our Section will also be to help educate the membership about how to access the information available on the Bar website or through the Bar's various technology applications.

Co-Chairs: Monica P. Ruela, Esq., Capell Barnett Matalon & Schoenfeld LLP, 100 Jericho Quadrangle, STE 233, Jericho, NY 11753, (516) 265-1117, mruela@cbmslaw.com and Stephen J. Silverberg, Esq., The Law Office of Stephen J. Silverberg, P.C., 185 Roslyn Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577, (516) 307-1236, sjs@sjslawpc.com.

Meeting Times: TBD

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### **Veterans' Benefits Committee**

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Description: The mission of the Veterans' Benefits Committee is to provide educational programs and information to the Section regarding Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") healthcare and financial benefits available to our clients. We also provide information regarding the interplay between VA benefits and other public benefits such as Medicaid. We alert members to rule changes regarding benefits and attorney representation of veterans, and provide references to alternate sources of information regarding both federal and state-run resources.

Chair: Sarah Amy Steckler, Esq., Keane & Beane, PC, 445 Hamilton Avenue, 14th Floor, White Plains, NY 10601, (914) 946-4777, [ssteckler@kblaw.com](mailto:ssteckler@kblaw.com).

Meeting Times: TBD