

Elder Law

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Repository Citation

Mulcahy, Jane M.R. (2002) "Elder Law," *Marquette Elder's Advisor*: Vol. 3: Iss. 4, Article 12.
Available at: <http://scholarship.law.marquette.edu/elders/vol3/iss4/12>

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BOOKSHELF

Elder Law

By Jane M.R. Mulcahy

Elder Law by attorney Jeffrey A. Helewitz (Delmar 2001) is a textbook that endeavors to help the student/reader understand elder law from a practical point of view. The acknowledged goal of the author is to “demystify” elder law for paralegal students. Beyond this goal, the book is a primer for anyone who asks the question, “What is elder law?”

The book is comprehensive in its scope, covering the full gamut of elder law topics: health care, employment and income issues, housing, guardianship, issues regarding disabled children, estate planning, elder abuse, and general assistance available to the elderly. It provides everyday examples to illustrate the principles discussed. Each chapter is followed by practical exercises that put the lessons of the chapter to work.

The organization of the book makes it an ideal, quick desktop resource. Key terms are not only discussed in the text, but are highlighted in the margin with

definitions, and repeated in glossary form in the back of the book. In addition, each chapter includes judicial decisions that provide legal support for the issues presented. I found the list of addresses and telephone numbers of resource providers contained in the “Assistance for the Elderly” chapter especially useful.

An example illustrates the brevity and scope of the treatment. The chapter on housing includes, in its fifty-six pages, material on renting and tenants’ rights, state and federal rental assistance, and public housing subsidies. Under “shared housing,” it includes single-room occupancy facilities, adult homes (i.e., nonmedical residential facilities), and “enriched housing,” which appears to encompass retirement housing with services. This is catalogued in the first eight pages.

The section “Help for the Homeowner,” at fourteen pages, includes descriptions and examples on such diverse topics as tax assessments (including a note on assistance to help elderly homeowners avoid eminent domain takings of their property), home repairs, utility assistance

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through the federal Low Income Energy Assistance (LEAP) Program (which apparently has an error in the title, which should be Energy Assistance Program rather than "Equity" Assistance Program). The section includes reverse mortgages, federal and private, and sale-leaseback arrangements. Further, it discusses Truth in Lending law, the ramifications of selling a house with

a form (the Uniform Residential Loan Application), and Fair Housing Laws.

Elder Law is *not* an in-depth treatise of the law, and its coverage is not the type appropriate for law students. Although the book comprehensively and accurately touches upon issues that face elder law practitioners, it is not, and does not claim to be, a practice

book for elder law attorneys. It is the perfect material for legal assistants, social workers, or students in another field who want to understand the elder law arena. Its chapters could well be utilized for in-service training in the elder law firm, and used thereafter as reference material to clarify staff understanding of the legal work.