

Vital Legal Documents During Kids' College Years

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

Did you know that once children turn 18, parents lose the legal authority to make decisions for them? An individual who has reached the age of 18 is considered an adult in the eyes of the law. This includes the loss of parental ability to access educational information, medical records, represent them in certain situations or manage their financial affairs. Although laws and circumstances vary, in general, proper documents must be generated that grant the parent(s) the authority to act on the adult child's behalf. The purpose of this article is to jumpstart the process of families thinking through important legal matters that may support them and their adult children during the college or early adult years and in the event of an emergency. Good planning now helps to ensure peace of mind later.

The following documents should be considered to allow you to continue to aid your adult child with regard to educational, medical and financial information and decisions:

1. FERPA Release: This form allows the parent(s) to speak with the school about your adult child's grades and other information related to their school performance. Ask the college directly for this form since each usually has its own form to use for this purpose.

2. Health Care Power of Attorney: This document will allow you to act on your adult child's behalf with regard to medical decisions in the event that they are incapacitated, even temporarily, and cannot make such decisions. There are also provisions within this document that allow your adult child to express his or her wishes with regard to end of life decisions and organ donation.

3. Durable Power of Attorney: This document allows you to act on your adult child's behalf regarding financial or legal matters. For example, you would have the ability to pay your child's bills, apply for student loans, sign tax returns, etc.

4. HIPAA Authorization Form: Federal law prohibits disclosure of information about your child's health. This form allows you to access your adult child's health records and speak to medical personnel about his or her health. In the event of a medical emergency, for example, if your child was in an accident and unconscious, you would be able to obtain medical status information and make prompt decisions regarding treatment options.

It is highly recommended that you consult with an attorney regarding these issues. Much of the information contained in this article is based on advice given by an attorney (<https://sites.google.com/site/robingorenberg/Documents-for-Adult-Children>) and distributed through college admission professional organizations. Now that you have survived the college admission process with careful planning and attention to important details, you can enjoy greater peace of mind by having your legal house in order during the college years ahead.



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college advisor who draws upon 25 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com. Visit www.doingcollege.com for more information about her services.

TEEN SCENE

Summertime Traveling: For Fun and For Health

By Henna Hundal

Around this time of year, the days of endless sunshine and cool summer breezes infuse a new type of energy in us. We get a little more invigorated, adventurous, and ready to leave our comfort zones. Whether it consists of taking small day trips or going on grand vacations, some form of traveling is bound to be on many folks' agenda this summer. Traveling is a great diversion, after all. But did you know vacations are healthy for you?

In December of last year, the U.S. Travel Association, in conjunction with the Global Commission on Aging and the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies, conducted a comprehensive poll, which found that women who vacation at minimum twice a year have a notably lower risk of developing a heart attack or coronary death compared with women who travel less frequently. In addition, the results suggest that men who don't opt to travel at least once a year have a 30 percent increased chance of death from heart disease.

These statistics indicating a solid link between travel and wellness surprised high school sophomore Emma T. "I wasn't aware before that traveling could actually have healthy effects on your body," she says. "I'll definitely be keeping that in mind when I travel this summer." Junior Sami R. is equally amazed by the facts. "Preventing heart attacks is a huge concern in our country right now, and everyone's trying to find solutions," she notes. "It's neat that traveling might be one of the answers."

But that's not all. The poll results further suggest that traveling has the capacity to brighten an individual's overall mood, as 86 percent of the people from the survey who travel feel content with their prospects in life, as opposed to the 75 percent of non-travelers who feel the same way. Some researchers speculate that the spontaneity inherent in vacations nurtures a latent side of oneself and expands one's mind to take on new chal-

lenges.

Junior Andrew B. recognizes the strong correlation between going on trips and emotional well-being in his own life. "I always feel better after I take a break from my normal life and go somewhere fun," he says. "It's cool that there's actual science that supports this because I've personally felt these effects for a long time." Freshman Tia R. is also able to understand the beneficial ramifications of excursions. "When I'm on vacation I've never really thought about this stuff, but looking back I can see how it plays a role," she admits. "It's like, who isn't going to just feel happier when you get to try out new things?"

Clearly, if components of both physical and mental health are boosted through traveling, then no doubt this poll gives us more reason to treat ourselves to some form of respite. In the summertime in particular, don't be afraid to escape the mundane daily routine for the chance to embrace fresh experiences. The odds say, not only will you find yourself having a fabulous time, but you'll be reaping some considerable health benefits as well.



Express Yourself! Teen Radio Reporter and Be the Star You Are! volunteer, Henna Hundal, is a 12th grader on a mission to empower the younger generation to lead active, healthy lives.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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