



Dear Clients and Other Friends,

What a summer! What a year!! We all are adjusting and finding new ways to live our best lives. I was fortunate to get up to Yosemite and the Eastern Sierra, right before all the fires started, and do some (socially distanced) camping and hiking with my son Jack and daughter-in-law Kate.

The holidays will be here before we know it. Just like last year, we will have a red kettle in our office for donations to the Salvation Army, and I will do a few shifts ringing the bell, probably in front of Safeway. I hope you and your families can enjoy them together, even if traditions must be modified.

Very truly yours,



Kirsten Howe



**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- Are You Worried About a Resident in a Long-Term Care Facility? ..... Page 1-2
- Absolute Trust Talk ..... Page 2
- Virtual Services ..... Page 2
- Election Day ..... Page 2
- What's Madison Gunn Up To? ..... Page 3
- How Can I Sign My Estate Plan During COVID-19? ..... Page 3
- Stay Informed ..... Page 3
- Dear Clients ..... Page 4

**ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT A RESIDENT IN A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY?**

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on services. The mortality rate for COVID-19 among the elderly is substantially higher than in other age groups. The disease has hit especially hard among those in long-term care facilities.

The Contra Costa Health Service website features a variety of dashboards that track cases, hospitalizations and deaths in the county, broken down by city. (coronavirus.cchealth.org/) County-wide, deaths at long-term care facilities make up about 55% of all county deaths due to coronavirus. In certain cities, such as Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek, as of last month, the only deaths reported were in long-term care facilities.

All of this bad news makes family members extra worried about their loved ones in long-term care facilities. And, for a variety of reasons, they can have a lot of trouble getting information from the facilities about their family member's health. Except in the situation where a resident is near the end of life, family members are not allowed to enter the facility to visit; many residents are not physically capable of a "through-the-window" visit; many residents do not have phones, tablets or laptops to communicate with family;

and the facilities are very busy caring for residents and sometimes don't have the extra time necessary to address the increased number of information requests from anxious families. All of this adds up to a lot of fear and frustration for those of us who care about a long-term care facility resident.



So, what can you do?

1. Stay Informed. In May, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ordered all skilled nursing facilities to report COVID-19 to the CDC. This data is listed, by facility on the California on the California Department of Public Health website. (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/>) A similar report can be found for Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFEs), which include assisted living, board and care, and memory care facilities, on the California Department of Social Services website. (<https://cdss.ca.gov/>)
2. Ask for Updates. The facilities and their staff are working very hard trying to care for their residents and address the new challenges presented by this disease. They have an obligation to keep family members informed, but sometimes that cannot be their most urgent priority. In other words, you

(CONT.)

## ARE YOU WORRIED? (CONT.)

may have to be patient. Also, do everything you can to make it easier for the facility to communicate with you. You might ask if there can be a specific staff member you can talk to every time or if there is a good time of day to call for information.

3. Report. If you've asked for and are entitled to information about a resident but the facility fails to provide it, the Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa Solano and Alameda may be able to help you get communication

going. Their website also is a tremendous resource for information about long-term care facilities and COVID-19 (<https://www.ccsombudsman.org/>) so check that out.

4. Act. If you are unable to get the information you need about a resident you may have to get an attorney involved. This is not my first recommendation because attorneys do cost money. But if you need help, we are here for you.

## ABSOLUTE TRUST TALK

If you need something new to listen to while you are at home, please subscribe to our podcast, Absolute Trust Talk on iTunes.

We have over 30 episodes with important and helpful topics, and we have additional episodes that aired as a special series of Facebook Live episodes. You can also find every episode on our website,

[www.AbsoluteTrustCounsel.com](http://www.AbsoluteTrustCounsel.com).

Click on the podcast tab at the top of our home page and you will have access to every one of the interviews.



## VIRTUAL SERVICES

Due to ongoing health and safety concerns, we are very excited to be able to offer virtual services to our clients. This means that we can help clients located anywhere within the State of California as well! We are now offering the following services whether or not our physical office is open:

- Telephonic Appointments
- Videoconferencing via Zoom
- Online Payment Options

- Online Fillable Forms via E-Mail – no downloading or attachments required
- Mobile Notary Referrals

We are able to complete your estate plan completely using virtual tools or you may want to choose a hybrid of services to minimize your need to come to the office. To schedule an appointment, email [admin@absolutetrustcounsel.com](mailto:admin@absolutetrustcounsel.com) or call us at 925-943-2740. We look forward to hearing from you!

## ELECTION DAY – TUESDAY, NOV. 3

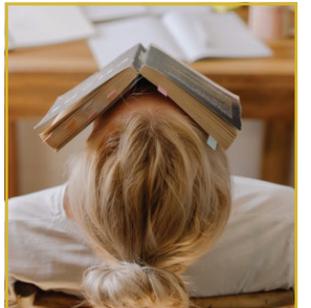
If you haven't sent in your ballot yet, time is running out. This year's Presidential Election is just days away and you don't want to miss this opportunity.



## WHAT'S MADISON GUNN UP TO?

We introduced you to our associate attorney, Madison Gunn in March of 2019. She has been very busy this past year. In addition to full-time responsibilities at Absolute Trust Counsel meeting and assisting our clients with their estate planning goals, she is also on the Executive Board of the Tri Valley Estate Planning Council as Secretary as of June 1, 2020. She is also a founding member and Vice Chair of the SF Bay Area Chapter of the National Aging in Place Council (NAIPC) which began in January of

2020 and a panel speaker for the Divorce Plan, a resource group for people contemplating divorce or separation, whose seminars began in August of 2020. Would you say she's a bundle of energy?



## HOW CAN I SIGN MY ESTATE PLAN DURING COVID-19?

Most of the documents our clients sign when creating or updating an estate plan are usually notarized. Unlike some other states, California law does not provide the authority for California notaries public to perform a remote online notarization. You must appear personally before the notary in order to have your documents notarized. Of course, in the midst of a pandemic, not everyone feels comfortable with face-to-face meetings. Fortunately, there are a variety of approaches we are taking for our clients to get their documents signed in the way that works best for them:

1. Those who really don't want to leave the house may contact a mobile notary. Mobile notaries are individual notaries who travel to a customer's location to perform notarizations.
2. Other clients may want to take their documents for signing to a notary at a UPS or FedEx store;
3. Although it is not our recommended practice, some of the standard estate planning documents either do not require notarization, such as a trust, specifically require only witnesses, such as a will, or the law provides for an alternative procedure using either witnesses or a notary, such as powers of attorney and health care directives.

4. For those who are willing to come to our office to sign their documents as recommended, we have a very carefully choreographed process for helping you with your signing without exposing anyone to unnecessary risk:
  - a. Everyone in our office must wear masks;
  - b. When you arrive you will be shown to a seat in our conference room that is 8 feet away from the team member who will notarize your documents;
  - c. You will place your identification on the table so that the notary can see it without having to touch it;
  - d. The pages you will review and sign are marked so that you can turn the pages yourself without a team member coming near you;
  - e. The notary journal will be open and marked for your signature and thumbprint; and
  - f. We will work as efficiently as possible to minimize your time in our office.

If you have other concerns about signing your documents please give us a call!

## THE EASIEST WAY TO STAY INFORMED

Social media can be a very helpful way to stay informed and educated on recent changes and events happening in our industry. If you haven't already, please "like" or "follow" us on our social media Facebook, Twitter and

LinkedIn by typing Absolute Trust Counsel and Kirsten Howe in the search box and click on "Like" or "Follow." It's that easy. You will have quick access to our blogs, announcements, events and much more.

[facebook.com/absolutetrustcounsel](https://facebook.com/absolutetrustcounsel)

[linkedin.com/in/kirstenhowe](https://linkedin.com/in/kirstenhowe)

[@kirstenhowe](https://twitter.com/kirstenhowe)

Please recycle, reduce and reuse by sharing this newsletter with your family and friends. If you no longer wish to receive it, please send an email to [info@absolutetrustcounsel.com](mailto:info@absolutetrustcounsel.com).