

**By Doris Green**  
**Director of Future Care Planning Services**  
Democrat & Chronicle Letter

“I never thought my son would outlive me. What will happen to him when I am gone?”

This quote, from the 80-year-old mother of a developmentally disabled son gave impetus to the 2002 launch of a service designed to help aging caregivers develop written health, housing, legal, financial and guardianship plans for the future care of their also aging dependent loved ones with disabilities.

Future Care Planning Services walks caregivers through a 4-step process designed to encourage and motivate them to complete a plan. The process includes the development of a Letter of Intent, a legacy document that describes both the caregiver’s and disabled person’s wishes and preferences. We also provide caregivers with legal and financial planning options involving Medicaid, Social Security, health insurance, wills, burial planning and establishment of Powers of Attorney, Supplemental Needs Trusts and guardianship. A consultant attorney advises our staff on all legal issues and oversees the legal aspects of establishing guardianships.

Planning isn’t easy. Many caregivers have nearly insurmountable psychological barriers to thinking about a time when they cannot care for their sons or daughters. However aging caregivers face critical decisions such as: where will the person with the disability live? Who will care for him or her? How will his or her finances be handled? Who will legally make decisions on his or her behalf?

Not long ago, one of Lifespan’s staff attended the funeral of a woman who had taken care of her son for 56 years. After the service, the woman’s daughter said to my co-worker, “Please don’t leave. We don’t know what is going to happen to our brother now that mom has died.”

Future Care Planning Services, a collaborative program of Lifespan, the Al Sigl Center and the Arc of Monroe, can help families avoid crisis and have peace of mind. To learn more about our services visit [www.futurecareplanning.org](http://www.futurecareplanning.org) or call me at 585-340-5883.

###