This text is intended to provide a helpful introduction to the basics of what is today known as elder law. The text is written with an eye toward practitioners who need an easily accessible book on the basics of this area of law. With this objective in mind, the text provides references to other outstanding ABA elder law–related publications. Readers desiring to become more proficient in elder law should consider adding most or all of these publications to their libraries.

The text includes a number of useful legal documents, including wills, various trusts, powers of attorney, and advance directives, that are commonly used when drafting for elder clients. A word of caution is in order. The reader is reminded that the forms should not be used without being certain they meet the requirements of the lawyer’s own state law. Additionally, because there are variations in the implementation and administration of Medicaid laws among the states, lawyers are reminded to be certain of their own state laws when using any of these forms. Minor modifications will often be needed. In addition to the forms, a number of checklists are provided throughout the text. The checklists simply provide a convenient way to summarize the laws and issues being discussed.

The reader will note that the chapters begin with an overview. The overviews are intended to give quick reference to particular sections of the chapter for which the lawyer will have the most use. Also, the reader will find references to helpful websites of the various government agencies administering programs that affect your elder clients. Each of these government agencies has excellent web pages that provide very useful information. These web pages are updated regularly, which makes them a valuable tool for an attorney working in this area of the law.

Social Security, SSI, Medicare, Medicaid, and Veteran’s Administration laws and regulations are tedious to read and understand. On a personal note it is hoped that the reader will find this text useful in understanding this area of the law. The reader who wishes to practice in this area of the law is encouraged to not only read the publications from the ABA referenced in this book but also to take time to attend continuing education programs in the reader’s own state in order to become well versed in the state-specific application of many of these laws.