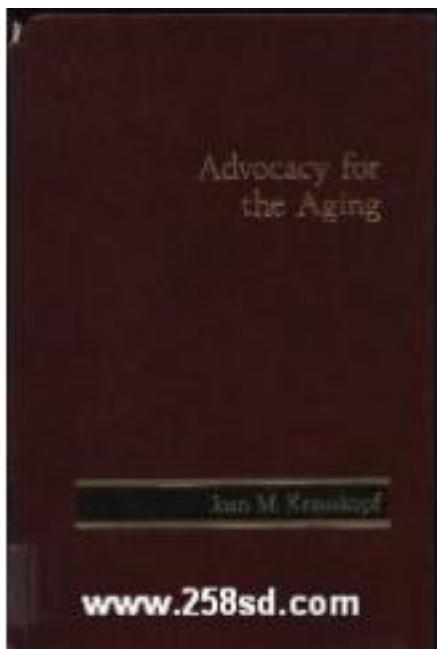


Advocacy for the aging



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PREFACE
The aged are a rapidly increasing proportion of the population of the United States. There are more than twenty-five million persons over 65 years old in the country and the projections are that 25 percent of our population will be that age by the turn of the century. In four states more than 12 percent of the population are now over the age of 65. By the mid 1970s it was recognized that this increasing segment of our population needed special services in order to maintain their economic and personal independence in a highly technological society. Consequently numerous public programs and diverse social and legal agencies which affect the aged have developed in recent years. The United States Congress in 1965 passed the Older Americans Act stating in its preface that millions of older citizens were suffering

>unnecessary harm and that its purpose was to provide comprehensive
social services for the aged. In the past few years success of the Older
Americans Act can be measured by the fact that more than any other
age group elderly persons are relying upon monolithic
complex public
and private institutions for their day to day existence. It is not only
the Federal government! but also states and the private sector which
are providing programs and services for the aged that did not exist 15
years ago. (Governmental reorganization has established an entire
division or Department of Aging within most state governments.
These statewide agencies plus Area Agencies on Aging channel federal
funding for numerous projects.
The irony with which we must deal is that the very success of the
programs for the elderly has created a serious need for effective legal
representation for them. As formerly healthy individuals enter the aged stage of life they are beset by a bewildering
array of social programs in regard to which they have legal rights and
obligations. They face a large number of complex problems involving
for example
Social Security retirement
Medicare or Medicaid
housing
discrimination in employment
consumer affairs
private pensions or
guardianships and mental commitments. The individuals in this group
are more helpless than most to deal with these legal issues because of
a relative lack of education
timidity and increased health problems.

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