

Jackson & MacNichol

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Information From Jackson & MacNichol Attorneys At Law

Toll Free: 1-800-JACKSON (1-800-522-5766)

May 2020

Message from Alexandra and Francis Jackson and the Jackson & MacNichol team

At Jackson & MacNichol, maintaining the safety and well being of our clients and employees while delivering the highest quality legal services with the best possible outcomes are our paramount concerns. We understand that everyone is very concerned about the coronavirus, especially our older clients. At the same time, many clients are already unhappy with the delays built into the disability systems and are concerned about claims being delayed further.

Currently, Social Security has suspended all live and video hearings at the Office of Hearings Operations. They are presently not saying when they plan to hold live and video hearings again. In the meantime, we working to establish a private hearing site in our office for video hearings to be held.

Social Security is still processing claims at all other levels other than hearings including an initial decision, a reconsideration decision or an Appeals Council decision. For those with cases at the federal court, the courts remain open and will continue to process cases.

The VA has suspended live and video hearings at the Board of Veterans Appeals. However, the Board is still holding "virtual" video hearings using the VA's telehealth video system.

We are all in uncharted waters. In light of the CDC guidance that we limit ourselves to groups

of no more than 10, we have arranged for most of our team to work remotely, limiting our in office personnel to a skeleton staff of 10 or less at any one time. Our attorneys and case managers are set up to work remotely and are doing so at this point. Our offices remain open physically with the skeleton crew only, following best practices as recommended by the CDC and state and local officials.

The only effect that this will have is that some phone calls will go to voicemail and the response may be delayed. Response to items sent to us by fax, email or mail may also sometimes be delayed. We apologize in advance for any delays. You will get a response even if it is delayed.

This is the latest information that we have. Our ability to sustain ongoing operations is currently unimpaired but candidly it is impossible to know what will happen in the long term at this time since there is even the possibility of multiple week quarantine extensions. These are very challenging times but we want to assure our clients that we are prepared to meet these challenges and we will all get through this together. As always, your legal needs remain our priority. Rest assured that Jackson & MacNichol is operating smoothly and safely during this unprecedented time, and we will continue to serve your needs for legal services. In the meantime, please be careful and safe!

New England

Social Security Disability and Personal Injury Law

Nationwide

Veterans Disability Law



Coronavirus (COVID-19) and beyond:

HOW WE CAN HELP

Social distancing, constant hand washing, stockpiles of toilet paper...we're all adjusting to life during a pandemic, but that doesn't make it easy. For many of us, the most frustrating part is knowing that lots of people are suffering and thinking there's nothing we can do to help. The good news is, there are things we can do to help those around us! During the COVID-19 pandemic and any that come in the future, do your part for the community by helping in the following six ways:

1. **Follow all official orders and recommendations.** This is a society-wide problem that requires a society-wide solution. If we all act together, we can beat a pandemic.
2. **Be a role model for those around you:** wash your hands often; cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow; clean and disinfect surfaces and objects; avoid touching your face; and keep your distance from others. And don't just do these things, talk about doing them too. Set an example others can follow.
3. **Don't hoard.** Call out others who are hoarding. In a time of crisis, basic supplies can run low when our first responders and medical professionals need them the most.
4. **Stay home from work when sick.** If you have the power to influence the culture of your workplace, make sure to push for others to do the same. It should not be socially acceptable to come to work sick.
5. **Help with child care and meals.** When schools are closed, childcare becomes a major issue for working parents! Help if you can. Nutritious meals, for children or for our elderly neighbors, may be harder to come by during a pandemic. If you have extra, sharing is a great way to help.
6. **Look out for the most vulnerable.** Be especially mindful about putting seniors or people with health conditions at risk. If you have loved ones who fall into a high-risk category, it is hugely helpful if you are able to run errands for them so they can avoid putting themselves at risk in public.

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A referral is the greatest professional compliment we can receive. If you have a friend, neighbor, or family member who is in need of legal representation with the VA, please consider referring them to our firm. We will do our best to provide the highest possible level of service and deliver winning results.

VISIT US ONLINE AT

WWW.VETERANSBENEFITS.COM



Jackson & MacNichol

238 Western Ave.

South Portland, ME 04106

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The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for professional legal advice. For your specific situation, please call the appropriate legal professional.

GOVERNMENT STIMULUS CHECKS

Those who receive benefits from Social Security and from the VA are both eligible for the \$1200.00 individual stimulus payment check. However, those who only get veterans benefits may be treated differently. The IRS has figured out that people whose only income is Social Security often don't file tax returns but are still easily identifiable. The Federal Government knows who they are because they send those Social Security checks or direct deposits. The announcement from Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was that: "Social Security recipients who are not typically required to file a tax return need to take no action, and will receive their payment directly to their bank account." We have not yet seen a similar announcement for our VA clients.

If you filed your 2018 or 2019 taxes, and you still have the same bank account, your stimulus check was supposed to be direct deposited into that account, beginning in April. If you did not provide bank account

information to the IRS with a tax return and they don't have your bank account information, printed checks started being mailed after April 17th. There is no word yet on when they will all be mailed out, just that they will start mailing them after they do the direct deposits. We are being told that you will only receive a check if you are income eligible and filed a tax return in 2018 or 2019, or if you receive Social Security benefits. In other words, veterans who are not also Social Security recipients may need to file a 2018 or 2019 tax return to get a check. If you have too little income to pay taxes you may still need to file (for free) to get your information into the system. Veterans are eligible for the stimulus payment but some may need to file a tax return even though they owe no taxes, in order to get their payment. For more information on stimulus checks, visit the IRS economic payment FAQ site: <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>

238 Western Ave., South Portland, ME 04106

Toll Free: 1-800-JACKSON (1-800-522-5766) • www.VeteransBenefits.com