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Iowa Assisted Living Association
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Advance Work

Your Personal Protection Assignment

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Intro Advance Work

In the Secret Service, protection is more than simply arriving at an event in a motorcade and surrounding the President or other "protectee". Protection starts days, weeks, and sometimes months before an actual event.

The Advance Team is a group of agents assigned to develop and implement a security plan for an event/visit such as a campaign rally or a meeting at the United Nations. This group of agents conducts a security assessment, establishes manpower needs, memorizes motorcade routes, investigates any incoming threats, creates a plan for appropriate access control, and so much more. It's a daunting task, but it's necessary (and worth the time).

I loved my protection assignments as a Secret Service agent. I especially loved advance work. But I said "yes" to work and "no" to my family and loved ones most of the time. I thought my family would understand that my job was important. I didn't take time off. I didn't take care of myself. The list goes on.

It all caught up with me in a big way about ten years into my career when I found myself divorced, depressed, and unemployed. I thought that was the lowest I could go, but these sad new beginnings were the start of something bigger in my life. I realized I needed to start protecting myself with the same enthusiasm I easily exhibited when protecting others. One of my hardest self-protection decisions was leaving the Secret Service.

Self-protection is difficult. My personal advance work involved an honest deep dive into my life and the people and circumstances that controlled me. I'm thankful the Secret Service gave me the tools to start protecting myself, inside and out. When I took the elements of an advance assignment and applied them to my life, I was able to see the blatant "security risks" I'd missed. I've found it beneficial to revisit my personal advance work from time to time.

I hope this handout will help you identify areas of your life that might have access control issues or other security risks. I hope it provides a glimpse of clarity. And, finally, I hope you will see the importance of taking swift action when you're not doing okay.

You are worth protecting!

Melanie Lentz

Protection

I am worth protecting

Secret Service advance work has several elements. Each team member has a job, and they work together to create a plan for the protectee's arrival.

Some of the tasks include...

- Conduct site security surveys (access points, building layout, etc.)
- Establish manpower needs, brief supervisors, schedule bomb sweeps, complete paperwork, communicate with staff members regarding the protectee's movements, run motorcade routes, coordinate intersection control with local law enforcement, investigate any threats along the way, etc.
- Adjust and adapt on "game day" when something doesn't go quite right.

It might be obvious that some politicians need protection to get around safely. A Secret Service agent on a protection assignment puts someone else's needs, schedule, and priorities above their own. But it's naive to think that the agents don't have anything important going on in their lives outside of the job.

Being a Secret Service agent technically implies that someone else's life is more valuable than theirs. Additionally, the protectee's schedule and needs come before the agent's, on and off the figurative "clock". When the agents haven't been home for a holiday in five years while predominately living out of a suitcase, it's easy to get into the mindset that individual needs aren't important.

This concept is not only true for a Secret Service agent, but also for other occupations like yours. At work, your job involves fulfilling the needs of others and assisting them with difficult tasks. Whatever is going on in your personal life might need to wait until after work. Like many Secret Service agents, maybe it's also easy for you to minimize your need for self-protection.

Despite your shortcomings, you are worth protecting. And it's never too late to start.

3 Parts

Legacy Access Control Situation Report

As much as we might want self-protection to come with an all-inclusive manual, it just doesn't exist. Every circumstance and person is a little different. Self-protection for you might look a little different from me. We are going to mess up and lose our way once in a while. We might allow something or someone to have too much access and control over us. We might be dishonest with ourselves and others about our current well-being.

Here are three topics to discover and reflect upon as you start your advance work to better self-protection:

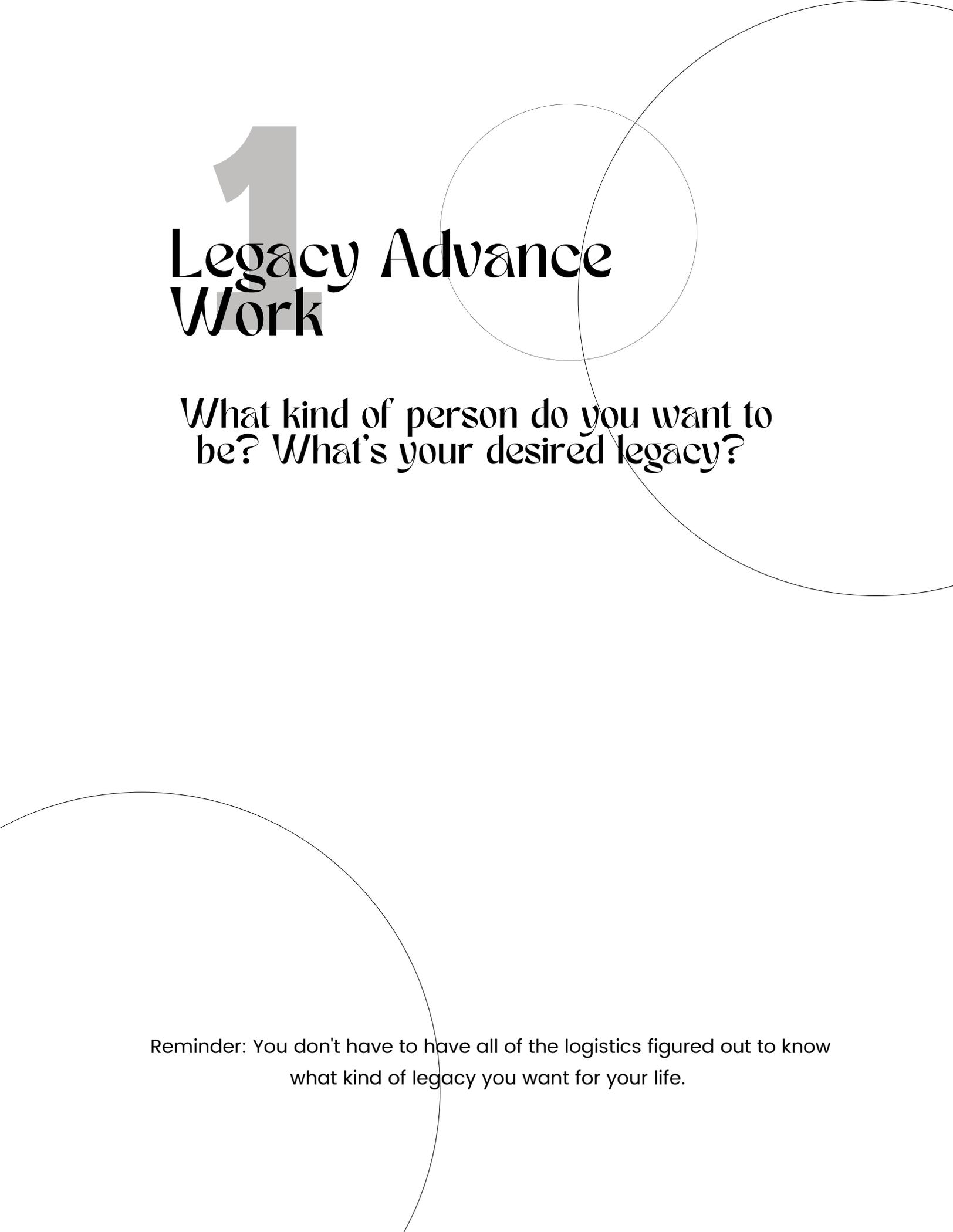
- **Legacy:** What kind of person do you want to be, regardless of your life circumstances?
- **Access Control:** Who or what influences you, and who or what should have access granted, denied, limited, or revoked to you?
- **Situation Report (Sit-Rep):** A personal status update that might require action on your part.

1 Legacy

What kind of person do you want to be? What do you want people to say or think about you after interacting with you? It's not meant to be a morbid thought process (i.e. What will people say about me when I'm gone?). Knowing your desired legacy will help you start protecting yourself (and your legacy).

Think about your legacy. What comes to mind? Below are some thoughts to get you started. When you're ready, flip the page and start drafting your own. Doodle if that helps. Write bullet points if that's your thing. Write a journal entry if that gets your brain flowing best. There's no "right" way to do this. Be yourself and roll with it!

- I want people to feel heard and appreciated when they're in contact with me.
- I want to be known as someone people can confide in and feel empowered when they walk away.
- I want my legacy to be an example to my kids of worth ethic and perseverance.

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1 Legacy Advance Work

What kind of person do you want to be? What's your desired legacy?

Reminder: You don't have to have all of the logistics figured out to know what kind of legacy you want for your life.

2 Access Control

In the Secret Service, access control IS protection. There's a fine, delicate balance to find when it comes to who needs access granted, denied, limited, or revoked to your protectee. It's not enough to just know the answers. Agents have to figure out how to efficiently and firmly enforce it.

For example, a makeup artist might only need temporary access to a protectee during an event. How does an agent ensure that the protectee is safe with the designated person? They'll do a background check and physically screen the person for weapons prior to granting limited access to the protectee.

Self-protection's version of access control operates similarly, but it's broken up into two categories:

- Internal Protection (emotional, spiritual, mental, etc.)
- External Protection (proactive vs. reactive physical defense)

Internal protection has more to do with identifying what controls your daily actions and thoughts and adjusting access as needed to become and stay the kind of person you want to be (legacy).

External protection is about preparedness and practicing proactive and reactive physical protection of yourself and your loved ones.

In this section, you'll identify areas that might need addressing in your life.

Access Control

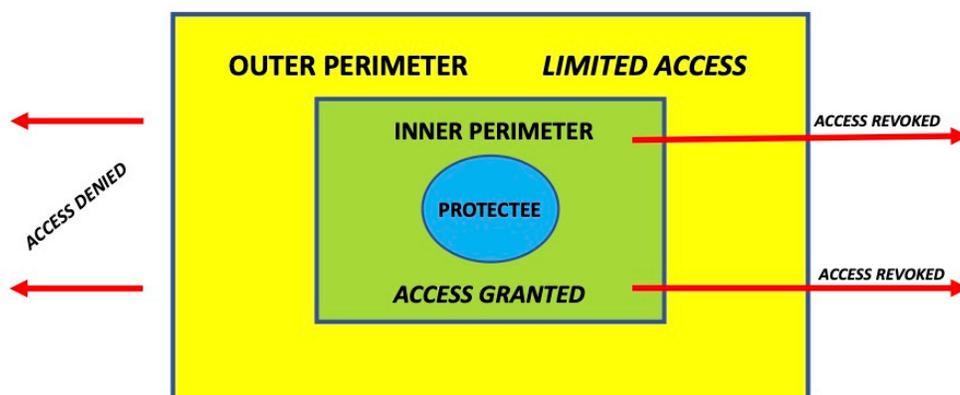
Granted, Denied, Limited, Revoked

Access control involves determining who and what should be allowed into your life. Access can be granted, denied, limited, and revoked. To put it mildly, access control is difficult. Sometimes access is granted to toxic people or circumstances, and the decision to revoke that access can get complicated, depending on the relationship. After a history of negative access, it can be easy to revoke access to everyone and everything, even positive access. No one gets it perfect every time.

In the diagram below, you are the protectee. Those closest to you are in your inner perimeter with access to you physically and/or emotionally. The outer perimeter includes those who shouldn't have an all-access pass but might be unavoidable in your daily life. In other words, there might be physical access without emotional or "inner" access.

- Access is not just physical. It can also be emotional and mental.
- You may not be able to control every person who has physical access to you, but you can control how that person affects you emotionally and mentally.
- Access control is selfish, and that's not a bad thing.
- Access to you is a privilege, not a right.

Basic Protection Diagram



2 Internal Access Control: Lists

Internal access control is recognizing who and what are allowed to control and influence your daily thoughts and actions and doing something about it when needed.

- Make a list of the people you typically see in a given week. (Ex: family, friends, coaches, coworkers, patients, teachers, etc.)
- Make a list of the websites you visit daily/weekly. (Ex: blogs, social media, etc.)
- Make a list of the locations you frequent regularly. (Ex: home, work, school, coffee shop, etc.)

2 Internal Access Control

Look at your lists, and consider how each person/place/website affects you.

- How do you feel when you're around that person or place?
- What does this person or place add to my life, both positive and negative?
- Do I alter my actions and behavior when I'm around a particular person or destination? Is this change positive or negative?
- Social media: How does its presence or absence affect you?
- If you're honest with yourself, what controls you the most?

How is your access control? What's jumping out at you? Are you seeing some red flags?

Use the rest of this page to make some notes about your current access control.

2 External Access Control

Proactive Protection: Prepared, not paranoid

Awareness & Intuition

AWARENESS: COVER YOUR "BASES"

B - Behaviors

A - Access Points

S - Security

E - Exterior

S - Safeguards

INTUITION: TRUST YOUR GUT

If something doesn't look right or feel right, it probably isn't right.

2 External Access Control

Reactive Protection: Quick and Accurate

Physical protection starts before a fight. Hopefully, your awareness will give you enough time to react and avoid a compromising situation altogether.

QUICK AND ACCURATE REACTION:

- Noise
 - Draw attention to yourself. Create a disturbance.
- Distance
 - Create distance between you and the threat.
 - Respecting personal bubble.
- Fight
 - If you have to fight, fight with all your might, and don't give up.
 - Material possessions can be replaced.

TOOLS FOR YOUR "TOOLBOX":

- "What if" scenarios
 - In your line of work, what kinds of problems tend to arise?
- Basic self-defense
 - Punches, vulnerable areas, weapons, blocking, etc.
- Practice
 - Create "muscle memory"
 - Example: Learn five self-defense moves this week

What personal protection habits do you need to start/modify? How can you go about implementing them?

3 Situation Report

You can revoke access to the things that bring you down, but internal change won't happen until you choose to address the issues. That's where Situation Reports come in.

Situation Reports are essentially status updates often used in the military and law enforcement. In the Secret Service, a "Sit-Rep" is a status update during motorcade movements. The agents at the destination give status updates to the motorcade. These updates must be accurate or there could be serious problems. For example, if a big truck pulls into an arrival point unannounced, this hazard needs to be removed before arrival. If the motorcade is not aware, it will arrive at a problem.

In the same way, personal Sit-Reps need to be honest and often require immediate action.

Basically, a Sit-Rep is an honest answer to the "How are you really doing?" question followed by action/adjustment.

- There is no shame in asking for help.
- If you're "all clear", then check back in with yourself at another time.
- Nothing changes if nothing changes.
- Know your options.

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3 Situation Report

What is your Situation Report or Sit-Rep today? If you're not "all clear", what are you going to do about it? You don't have to have all of the answers right this second. What comes to mind?

4 Your Impact

Many people also have access to YOU each day. If they were doing their own advance work, how would YOUR access to THEM be perceived?

On our best and worst days, we have an impact on others, even if it's small. Most likely, there are people who have not seen the best version of you. That's okay. You're human.

How can you proactively be a positive source of access to someone in your life?
Who comes to mind first as you reflect on this?

5 Plan of Action

Think about and write down some actionable steps you can take to better protect yourself. Also, consider how you can be a better source of positive access to someone you are in contact with regularly.

Here are some thoughts to get you going:

- Find a way to regularly remind yourself of your desired legacy. (Examples: phone or computer reminder, 3x5 card, whiteboard at home/work, etc.)
- How will you maintain appropriate access control, and how will you hold yourself accountable?
- When is your Sit-Rep the worst? When is it the best? How will you prioritize your mental and emotional health to avoid the slumps or combat them in a healthier way?
- What else comes to mind as you reflect on your self-protection?

The page features three large, thin, black-outlined circles that overlap each other. One circle is in the upper right, another is in the center, and a third is in the lower left. The name 'Melanie Lentz' is centered in a large, black, serif font.

Melanie Lentz

Melanie is a former U.S. Secret Service special agent and author of *Agent Innocent: How the Secret Service Changed My Life* and *Advance Work: A Personal Protection Assignment*. She writes the "Finding Security" blog for Psychology Today and speaks about how protecting others ultimately taught her how to protect herself. After leaving the Secret Service, she relocated from Los Angeles to the Midwest to start over in her thirties. Today, she owns a small personal training business and enjoys a simpler life closer to her family.

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