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Estate Planning Checklist

While hiring the right attorney will increase your chances of leaving your loved ones an estate that is well planned and easy to manage, knowing what you want and having the necessary information ready to provide to your attorney is the first step towards peace of mind for you and less frustration for your family. Below is a checklist to help you prepare for an initial consult with an estate planning attorney.

☐ Prepare a list of your assets and how they are titled (Is there a designated TOD, POD, or joint owner?). Under state law, joint owners generally become the new owner upon your death, so you should only title property jointly with those whom you wish to inherit the property.

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☐ You will need your life insurance policy information, including any named beneficiaries. State inheritance tax laws may allow named beneficiaries to collect life insurance proceeds tax free, so you will need to know if you have a beneficiary named, and who you have named.

- Insurance Company ______________________
- Policy Number ______________________
- Beneficiaries ______________________

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☐ Your attorney will need the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all your intended beneficiaries.

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☐ You should choose a Personal Representative to administer your estate, a Power of Attorney to help you manage financial affairs before your death, and a Health Care Representative to make health care decisions for you, should you become unable to make them for yourself. You should always name a back-up Personal Representative, Power of Attorney, and Health Care Representative in case your first choice is unavailable or unable to serve.

- Estate Administrator ______________________
- Power of Attorney ______________________
- Health Care Rep. ______________________

☐ If you have minor children you should choose a Guardian and a back-up Guardian for them and have their names, addresses, and phone numbers ready to provide to your attorney.

- Guardian ______________________
- Address ______________________
- Home Phone Number ______________________
- Cell Phone Number ______________________
- Child / Children ______________________

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- Child / Children ______________________

☐ Do you want a living will? If you do not wish to be kept alive on machines, you will need a living will.

☐ Will your family have access to the appropriate accounts in order to take care of financial responsibilities such as utility bills and funeral costs while waiting for your attorney to open your estate and transfer your assets to your Personal Representative or beneficiaries? You may want to title at least one bank account jointly with a responsible friend or family member so that immediate financial needs can be addressed without issue.

- Bank ______________________
- Account Number ______________________
- Others with Access ______________________

☐ Do you need a Trust? If any of your beneficiaries receive federal or state benefits such as social security disability, for which they may become disqualified if they receive a lump sum inheritance, you may need to set up a Special Needs Trust.

Beneficiaries Needing Trusts

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☐ You should also prepare a list of questions to ask your attorney during your initial Estate Planning consult. This will help ensure that you get the most out of your first meeting and all of your concerns are addressed. Your estate attorney will appreciate you being prepared for your meeting and you will be able to relax and concentrate on the information your attorney is providing you, instead of the information they are requesting that you provide to them.

Estate Planning Notes and Questions

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