

When to Review Your Estate Plan, and Why?

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Just like other important life tasks, your estate plan deserves your time and attention. It's important that you consider a review of your estate plan once a year. Think of this as your estate plan's annual physical exam, and remember—prevention is the best cure.

An annual exam isn't necessarily the only time we see a doctor. Similarly, an annual planning meeting isn't the only time you need to consider your estate plan. The occurrence of special life events may mean it is time to pick up the phone and call us.

If you experience any of the following significant life events, get in touch with us, and we'll make sure your estate planning documents are up to date:

Marriage

Have you recently been married? Congratulations! Marriage means new ways of sharing and managing finances and assets. As a result, this is an important time to revisit your estate plan. With this life change, you'll need to contact us to make any changes to your beneficiary designations, update your will/trust, and update your powers of attorney and advance medical directives. This is especially important if this is a second marriage and/or there are children from a previous relationship involved. Proper estate planning is the only way to ensure that you are protecting your loved ones the way you want.

New Job

A new job presents an exciting new set of challenges and opportunities to explore. It also brings very real financial changes. You may be receiving new benefits that require new beneficiary designations on your estate plan. When you are filling out these new forms, it is important that the beneficiaries are named appropriately so your estate plan will work as designed. In addition, you'll need to make sure your estate plan reflects the change to your financial status, whether that's a pay increase or a pay cut.

Loss of a Job

Similarly, leaving employment brings big changes to your financial situation and to your estate plan. It's important to update your plan to reflect the loss of employer-provided benefits such as life insurance, as well as the change in financial status.

Retirement

Welcome to your golden years! Retirement brings lifestyle changes, more time for loved ones, and important financial developments. Your estate planning attorney can help you change your plan to reflect that you've stopped earning income and have entered the phase where you will be beginning to use your retirement account. Also, with this new-found freedom, you may find yourself traveling more, making documents such as a Financial Power of Attorney and Advance Medical Directive more crucial.

Moved

If you have moved across state lines, you'll need to consult with a local estate planning

attorney to make sure that the provisions in your estate planning document are still applicable in your new state. A new home is a new asset, and it is important that this asset is titled appropriately to carry out your overall estate plan.

Divorce

Divorce is, of course, a difficult time. But it is critical to look out for your financial health and future if it occurs. You should make any needed updates to the beneficiaries on your estate plan and ensure your beneficiary designations on any life insurance or retirement accounts are changed so that your ex-spouse does not end up with your assets upon your passing.

Death

There is so much to take care of after the loss of a loved one. Take some time, but don't forget that your estate plan will need to be updated to reflect the change that has taken place. You may need to remove the deceased loved one as a beneficiary from any will, trust, life insurance policy, or retirement account and determine what will now happen to that person's share. It is also important to verify that your deceased loved one was not appointed as a Trustee, Personal Representative, or Agent, or if so, to make the necessary adjustments to your documents.

Received Inheritance

The death of a loved one not only brings a loss, but may result in an inheritance. An inheritance can mean property, money, real estate, and more. An increase in assets may necessitate a change in your estate planning strategy. Also, depending on the form of the inheritance you've received, there may be additional asset management or asset protection concerns that your estate planning attorney will need to address with you.

Birth or Adoption

Welcoming a new child to the family is an unforgettable time. You may feel inspired to look toward the future, and you should. This is a great time to plan to provide for your new family member's future. Due to the new arrival's young age, it is important to consider how you would like to provide for the child and who is going to be in charge of handling the assets until they reach a responsible age.

MM&C Estate Planning Attorneys are Honored to Help

Whatever life brings you and your family, we are here to help you weather the storms and celebrate the milestones. We'd be honored to help you ensure your estate plan is up to date to reflect these life changes. Together, we can craft a one-of-a-kind plan to ensure that you and your family are properly protected.

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