



## What Happens If You Do Nothing With Your Estate Plan?

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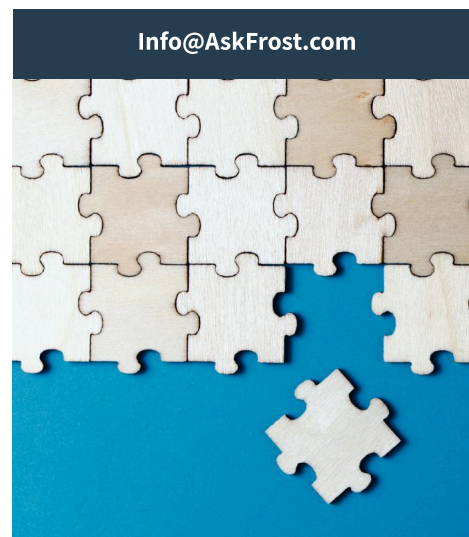
**It's more common than many people realize: successful families who have built significant wealth but have not yet put an estate plan in place, or who created documents years ago and have not revisited them since. In both cases, the outcome is often the same. Doing nothing, whether that means having no plan at all or relying on an outdated one, can create unnecessary stress, added costs, and avoidable complications for the people you care about most.**

If you pass away without a will or estate plan (“intestate” is the official term), your assets are distributed according to your state’s intestate succession laws. In that situation, you lose the ability to control key decisions. Rather than your assets passing according to your specific wishes, the state applies a fixed formula, which may not align with your intentions. This is particularly a risk in more complex family situations such as second marriages or blended families.

Your estate will also likely go through probate, a court-supervised process that can take months or longer to resolve. During that time, your family may face delays, legal fees, and administrative burdens at an already difficult moment. If you have minor children, the court will decide who serves as guardian, rather than allowing you to make that decision in advance. Just as importantly, without any planning in place, there is no opportunity to minimize estate taxes, protect assets, or provide structure for how wealth is managed and passed on over time. In a very real sense, doing nothing means giving up control—both financially and personally.

For many families, however, the issue is not the absence of a plan, but the fact that their existing plan has not been updated. They took the right steps at one point, but life, laws, and financial circumstances have changed. An outdated estate plan can be just as problematic as having none at all.

As wealth grows, the structure that once worked may no longer be appropriate. A plan designed for a more modest estate may not account for the complexities





that come with increased assets, business interests, or multi-state holdings. At the same time, estate and tax laws evolve, and strategies that were effective years ago may no longer provide the same benefits today.

Family circumstances also change over time. Children grow older, marriages and divorces occur, grandchildren are born, and priorities shift. If your documents do not reflect your current wishes, they can create confusion or even conflict among family members. In addition, many people accumulate new accounts, real estate, or investments over the years, and these assets are not always properly coordinated with the existing plan. When that happens, important details can fall through the cracks.

A common misconception is that estate planning is a one-time task. In reality, it should evolve alongside your life. A plan that has not been reviewed in five to ten years is often out of sync, less efficient, and more difficult for your family to administer when the time comes.

The bottom line is simple: doing nothing does not mean nothing happens; it means the decisions are made for you. Whether there is no plan in place or an outdated one, the result is typically less control, more complexity, and a greater burden on your family.

The good news is that addressing these issues does not have to be overwhelming. In many cases, a thoughtful review and a few updates can bring your plan back in alignment with your current life, wealth, and goals. For most families, that clarity and peace of mind are well worth the effort.

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