



Estate Planning Guide for Survivors

Estate Planning Is About Protection, Not Fear

Estate planning is not about expecting something bad to happen. It is about making sure the people you love are not left sorting through paperwork, court delays, and financial stress while they are already dealing with loss or crisis.

What Happens If You Do Not Have an Estate Plan

If you do not have an estate plan, state law determines critical decisions about your life and assets.

- Who receives your assets
- Who raises your children
- Who manages your finances
- Who makes medical decisions on your behalf

This can lead to delays, added costs, and decisions being made by a court rather than by you.

Four Pillars of an Estate Plan

The four foundational components of a well-structured estate plan are a Living Trust, Pour-Over Will, Financial Power of Attorney, and Medical Power of Attorney. Together, these documents create a complete system that protects you during your lifetime and ensures your wishes are carried out after your passing.

Living Trust

The living trust serves as the core of your estate plan. It holds your assets and directs how they are managed and distributed.

- Avoids probate in many cases
- Provides continuity during incapacity
- Maintains privacy
- Controls distribution of assets

Pour-Over Will

The pour-over will acts as a safety net for your estate.

- Transfers remaining assets into your trust
- Names guardians for minor children
- Handles personal matters not in the trust



Financial Power of Attorney

This document allows a trusted individual to manage your financial affairs if you cannot.

- Pays bills and manages accounts
- Handles investments and property
- Files taxes and communicates with institutions

Medical Power of Attorney

This document allows someone to make medical decisions for you if you are unable.

- Authorizes medical decisions
- Provides access to medical records
- Ensures your healthcare wishes are followed

How the Four Pillars Work Together

- The trust manages and distributes assets
- The will captures anything outside the trust
- The financial power protects you during incapacity
- The medical power protects your healthcare decisions

Planning for Incapacity

Without proper planning, loved ones may need court approval to act. With proper documents, trusted individuals can step in immediately.

Digital Assets

Your digital life is part of your estate. Without instructions, loved ones may face delays or denied access.

Guardianship

Without proper designation, courts decide who cares for children or incapacitated adults.

Why This Matters

- Protect your family
- Preserve your assets
- Reduce family conflict
- Minimize stress
- Ensure your wishes are followed

Take Control While You Can

A small investment of time now can save your family significant stress later.