



Estate Planning: Wills, Powers of Attorney & Trusts

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No one likes to think about his or her eventual death, but it is important to plan for it. Good estate planning can prevent headaches and anguish for your loved ones. It may even save your family thousands of dollars in taxes. Perhaps the most important reason to plan for your estate is this: if you don't, the state and federal government will decide how your possessions are distributed upon your death. The state generally follows a simple formula for distribution that may not align with your wishes.

Estate Planning Basics

The laws governing trusts and estate planning are increasingly complex. By engaging in estate planning, you can ensure that your family will be prepared in the event that you become seriously disabled or pass away. The primary objective of estate planning is to put your financial affairs in order to minimize stress in the event of your disability or following your death. A secondary objective is to ensure that the estate can be managed economically and efficiently so that your assets go to recipients and are protected against unnecessary loss. For most people, a basic estate planning program includes some or all of the documents described below:

- **Last Will & Testament ("Will"):** A Will is the actual document in which you indicate the disposition of your assets upon death and who will manage your estate. If you do not have a Will at the time of your death, the state can distribute your assets as described above.
- **Trusts:** A trust can hold property and assets for any young beneficiary you designate until he or she is old enough to manage the property. You determine the age at which the beneficiary will inherit his or her share. Trusts are also used for inheritance tax avoidance purposes.
- **Community Property Agreement:** This is an agreement in which your spouse automatically receives all of your property and assets at the time of your death.
- **Financial Durable Power of Attorney:** This creates provisions for handling your financial affairs in the event that you become unable to make important financial decisions or communicate those decisions during life (for example, if you fall into a coma or suffer severe brain damage or paralysis).
- **Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare Decisions and/or a Healthcare Directive:** The healthcare durable power of attorney creates provisions that authorize one or more individuals to make important healthcare decisions for you if you are unable to communicate your wishes. It may also be used to make provisions for burial and similar arrangements following your death.

Services

Working closely with an experienced estate planning attorney such as Tarutis | Legal Solutions is essential to ensuring that your estate planning goals, including financial and final healthcare wishes, are carried out properly. Whether you want to draft a will, create a trust agreement, set up a power of attorney, or complete a comprehensive estate plan, having an attorney by your side is invaluable. An attorney can also help you anticipate and avoid negative tax implications. Some of the services we provide include:

- Preparation of wills, trusts, powers of attorney, healthcare and other documents
- Development and implementation of complex gift and estate tax planning strategies
- Probate and trust administration
- Preparation of estate and gift tax returns and audit representation
- Advice on fiduciary duties of trustee, executors, officers and directors, and liability avoidance
- Business succession and tax planning, including shareholder agreements, operating agreements, voting trusts, creation of corporations, LLCs and partnerships

At Tarutis | Legal Solutions we are committed to helping individuals and families in estate planning and administration-related matters. We can assist you with preparing and executing all necessary documents while taking proactive steps to reduce your tax burden and protect your future.

Call us today at (206) 223-1515 to schedule a free one-hour consultation.