

Time to Dust Off Those Estate Planning Documents

Now that the holiday season is behind us, the new year is the perfect time to get out those dust covered estate and incapacity planning documents and make sure they are up to date.

The first task should be to make sure that you have a complete package of a last will and testament (and, if needed, a revocable living trust), a durable power of attorney, a designation of health care surrogate, a living will and a pre-need guardian declaration.

Next, check to see if any of the documents are over five years old. As a rule of thumb, documents that are over five years old should be reviewed by an attorney to see if any significant law changes have occurred that affect the document. Over the past ten years, Florida has seen law changes that affect just about every estate and incapacity document I mentioned above.

Third, you should make sure that none of the documents has been affected by a major life event in your family. Examples of major life events include marriages, births, deaths, divorces, relocations, medical needs, convictions etc... If they have been affected and the documents do not represent your current wishes, then it may be necessary to have them updated.

Fourth, be sure to update (or create) a listing of your assets. This listing is very helpful to your heirs and relatives if something should happen to you (death or incapacity). No one knows what and where your assets are better than you. Be sure to include life insurance, health insurance, disability insurance, homeowners insurance, etc... This time of year is also the perfect time to get with your financial advisor and/or insurance agent to make sure your assets are properly invested, diversified and protected.

Fifth, get ready for tax time. The above reviews should help with that endeavor. I usually create a file and put all the tax information that comes in after January 1st into that file. When it comes time to meet with the accountant everything is in one place.

Lastly, have a safe and Happy New Year!