



Questions for Determining When to Review Your Estate Plan

You may think that once you've created your estate plan, you're finished planning your estate. This, however, is not the case. To be effective as possible at reducing taxes and ensuring that your assets go where you want them to go, your estate plan must be reviewed and updated regularly.

Because of the uncertainty in the tax code changes, now is a good time to review your estate plan. Answering the following questions will help you determine how important it is for you to review your estate plan today and the areas on which you should focus.

Since I Last Reviewed My Estate Plan ...

If you answer "yes" to any of the following questions, reviewing your estate plan today is critical to maximizing its effectiveness.

1. Have I reviewed my Plan in the last three years? Have the tax laws changed?
2. Have I become a parent?
3. Have I become a grandparent, and if so, am I ready to plan for my grandchildren and take advantage of generation-skipping transfer tax planning?

4. Have I received an inheritance or am I likely to receive one in the near future?
5. Do I anticipate any creditor problems (including marital claims) involving myself, my spouse or my children or my grandchildren?
6. Do I anticipate anyone challenging or contesting my estate plan?
7. Have I moved to another state?

My Current Estate Plan

If you answered "no" to any of the following questions, consider reviewing these areas of your estate plan.

8. If I have a living trust, have I transferred title to all of my assets to the trust?
9. Have I confirmed that my beneficiary designations are consistent with my Will or living Trust?
10. Do I know the income or estate tax effect on benefits after my death?
11. Have I considered other types of plans, such as the Roth IRA, that may better suit my goals?

Warning Signals

- Plan has not been reviewed in 5 years.
- Changes in tax laws.
- Plan divides benefits between spouse and family members other than children of the marriage of husband and wife.
- Retirement benefits comprise significant portion of wealth (recent changes in the law affect this asset in particular).
- Changes in family – births, deaths, adoptions, marriages, engagements (think prenuptial agreements!), and divorces.
- Plan to buy new assets or for sale of assets (don't wait until sale takes place to see your estate planner).
- Desire to make lifetime gifts, even if you think you have used up your lifetime gift tax credit (strategies now exist for gifts that use no exclusion).
- Changes in nature or level of wealth (purchase or sale of real estate, current or anticipated appreciation in particular assets).

- Existence of family limited partnerships that have not been recently reviewed (new case law may affect them).
- Emerging needs of beneficiaries due to illness, changes in wealth, disability.
- New or changing views on including charitable beneficiaries in your estate plan.

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Now Is the Time To Do Things Better

A review of your estate plan need not involve a lot of time and money. If all is in order, you can have the peace of mind of having this confirmed. If there is a problem, a way to do things better or a way to save your family taxes, now is the time to learn about it. Please call us to discuss your current plan and identify ways to keep it up-to-date.