

Estate Planning

Estate planning is a highly individualized process requiring consideration of the client's financial holdings, tax exposure and comfort level with the various methods of preserving his or her property for their intended beneficiaries. Wills offer a simple and traditional means of organizing one's affairs. The members of our firm are experienced in assisting our clients in using trusts to ensure a more efficient, cost-effective and private disposition of their assets after their death. Assets placed in a trust can avoid probate, which is the process for estate administration that can take many months prior to the distribution of assets. In addition, a trust can be a private document, in contrast to a will, which must be filed in the public records of the local courthouse. Despite the many advantages of using a trust, some clients may prefer to use a will. We can provide legal counsel to our clients to ensure consideration of the important factors involved in estate planning decision-making.

Tax considerations are critical for the client with a large estate. Currently, the federal government begins levying estate taxes at \$5.49 million for an unmarried person, and \$10.98 million for married couples. In recent years, the estate tax has become a significant political issue, so it is possible that these tax levels will change. If an estate is approaching the federal tax threshold, our firm can provide you with a number of methods available to minimize estate taxes, including annual gifts, irrevocable trusts, charitable remainder trusts, life insurance trusts, qualified terminable interest property trusts and qualified personal residence trusts. You may wish to download our free confidential estate planning questionnaire at this [link](#). Reviewing your assets and bringing this questionnaire with you for your first appointment may help to quicken your estate planning process.