Comprehensive Estate Planning Documents Checklist

Estate planning in Allentown, PA, involves more than just a basic will. This comprehensive checklist outlines the possible documents you may need for a thorough **estate plan**, from essential legal instruments to specialized **trusts** and supplementary instructions.

While most people do not require every document listed, this guide serves as a comprehensive reference to help you consider all aspects of your estate planning needs in Allentown, PA, tailored to your unique situation, family dynamics, and financial circumstances.

Contact our estate planning attorneys at Van Horn Law online or directly at 610-437-2757 to schedule a personalized consultation.

We can review this checklist with you to determine which documents are necessary for your specific estate plan.

Core Legal Documents

Last Will and Testament

☐ Names beneficiaries, executor, guardians for minors

☐ Contains specific bequests

☐ Outlines funeral/burial wishes

Revocable Living Trust

☐ Names trustee and successor trustees

☐ Identifies beneficiaries

☐ Contains asset transfer provisions

☐ Includes distribution instructions

Financial Power of Attorney

☐ General (broad powers)

☐ Limited/Specific (restricted to certain actions)

☐ Durable (remains effective during incapacity)

☐ Springing (becomes effective upon a specific event)

Healthcare Documents

☐ Healthcare Power of Attorney/**Healthcare Proxy**

☐ Living Will/Advance **Healthcare Directive**

☐ HIPAA Authorization Forms

☐ Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST)

☐ Do Not Resuscitate (**DNR**) Order

Specialized Trusts

☐ Irrevocable Life Insurance Trust (ILIT) (removes life insurance from taxable estate)

☐ Special Needs Trust (preserves government benefits eligibility and provides supplemental care)

☐ Charitable Trusts (Charitable Remainder Trust and Charitable Lead Trust)

☐ Qualified Terminal Interest Property Trust (QTIP) (provides for the surviving spouse while preserving assets for children)

☐ Generation-Skipping Trust (transfers assets to grandchildren or later generations)

☐ Grantor Retained Annuity Trust (GRAT) (freezes asset values for transfer tax purposes)

☐ Qualified Personal Residence Trust (QPRT) (removes home from taxable estate)

☐ Spendthrift Trust (protects assets from beneficiary's creditors)

☐ Bypass/Credit Shelter Trust (maximizes estate tax exemptions for married couples)

☐ Qualified Domestic Trust (QDOT) (for non-U.S. citizen spouses)

☐ Dynasty Trust (preserves wealth for multiple generations)

☐ Pet Trust (provides for care of pets after owner's death)

Business Documents

Business Succession Plan

☐ Buy-Sell Agreement

☐ Operating Agreement updates

☐ Key Person Insurance policies

Family Limited Partnership/LLC Documents

☐ Partnership/Operating Agreement

☐ Membership/Ownership certificates

Financial Documents & Designations

List of Assets and Liabilities

☐ Comprehensive inventory

Beneficiary Designation Forms

☐ Retirement accounts (401(k), IRA, pension)

☐ Life insurance policies

☐ Annuities

☐ Transfer on Death (TOD) designations for investment accounts

☐ Payable on Death (POD) designations for bank accounts

Real Estate Documents

☐ Deeds

☐ Mortgage information

☐ Property tax information

☐ Transfer on Death Deed (in applicable states)

Digital Asset Inventory & Access Instructions

☐ Usernames and passwords

☐ Digital wallet information

☐ Account access instructions

Supplemental Documents

Letter of Instruction

☐ Personal messages to loved ones

☐ Explanation of decisions

☐ Location of important documents

Funeral and Burial Instructions

☐ Pre-paid funeral arrangements

☐ Specific wishes for services and disposition

Family Medical History

☐ Relevant genetic information

Personal Property Memorandum

☐ Specific gifts of tangible personal property

☐ Attached to will in many states

Tax Planning Documents

☐ Gift Tax Returns (Form 709) (records of lifetime gifts)

☐ Estate Tax Returns (Form 706) (filed for taxable estates)

☐ Income Tax Returns (prior years' returns)

☐ Basis Information for Assets (purchase records for investments and property)

Insurance Documents

☐ Life Insurance Policies (term life and permanent life policies)

☐ Long-Term Care Insurance (policy details and claims process)

☐ Disability Insurance (policy information)

Additional Specialized Documents

☐ Organ Donation Forms

☐ Authorization for Final Disposition (legal authority to handle remains)

☐ Community Property Agreements (for residents of community property states)

☐ Marital Property Agreements (pre-nuptial and post-nuptial agreements)

☐ Cohabitation Agreements (or unmarried partners)

☐ Guardianship Documents (for dependent adults)

☐ Trust Protector Provisions (appoints an individual with the authority to modify the trust)

☐ Foreign Asset Documentation (foreign bank accounts, foreign real estate, FBAR filings)

☐ Citizenship/Residency Documentation (for multi-national families)

Contact Our Estate Planning Attorneys in Allentown Today

These documents may have different requirements or varied names across states. Some states may not recognize certain documents when executed in another state if they don't comply with local laws.

Always reach out to our estate planning attorneys in Allentown, PA, by scheduling your personalized appointment at 610-437-2757 to avoid potentially costly mistakes.