

Get \$SMART Wausau C O A L I T I O N

"Educating people to make smart money choices."

Q Why is estate planning important for me?

A There are many different reasons for beginning your estate planning, ranging from avoiding taxes to protecting you and your family. We've had many clients who tell us that even after knowing the benefits of planning their estate, they continued to procrastinate because either they didn't know what the process included or they didn't know how to get started.

Many people mistakenly think that estate planning only involves the writing of a will. Estate planning, however, can also involve financial, tax, medical and business planning. A will is part of the planning process, but you will need other documents as well to fully address your estate planning needs.

Sadly, many families don't do proper estate planning because they don't believe that they have "a lot of assets" or otherwise believe that their kids can just come in and divide their assets by themselves. If you don't make proper legal arrangements for the management of your assets and affairs after your passing, the state's intestacy laws will take over upon your death or incapacity. This often results in the wrong people getting your assets, and very often results in much higher estate taxes.

Specifically, if you die intestate, the transfer of your assets is accomplished through a public, court-supervised proceeding called probate that generally takes a minimum of six months, typically a year or more. These public proceedings are generally expensive and time-consuming in nature and tie up your assets for several months. Even worse, your failure to outline your intentions through proper estate planning can tear apart your family as each person maneuvers to be appointed with the authority to manage our affairs. Nor is it unusual for bitter family feuds to ensue over modest sums of money or a family heirloom.

Start this topic of discussion today with a professional you feel comfortable working with.

Visit www.getsmartwausau.org for information on free or low-cost local programs to help you make smart money choices.