

Estate Planning Choices

This playbook provides guidance on deciding between a will and a trust for estate planning. It details the differences, benefits, and drawbacks of each option to ensure individuals can make an informed decision.

Step 1: **Research**

Begin by gathering information on both wills and trusts. Understand what each entails, which assets can be handled by each, and the legal implications of choosing one over the other.

Step 2: **Self-Assessment**

Assess your individual circumstances, including the size of your estate, your beneficiaries, and any specific desires you have for distributing your assets.

Step 3: **Legal Consultation**

Consult with an estate planning attorney or a legal expert to get personalized advice. They can provide clarity on complex aspects of each option and how they apply to your situation.

Step 4: **Consider Taxes**

Analyze the potential tax implications of a will compared to a trust. Understand how each option could affect the estate tax, inheritance tax, and any other relevant taxes.

Step 5: **Decide Control Level**

Decide how much control you want over your assets both during your lifetime and after. Trusts often allow for more control and privacy than wills, which is an important consideration.

Step 6: **Beneficiaries' Needs**

Consider the needs and circumstances of your beneficiaries, such as age, financial savvy, or special needs, to determine which estate planning tool is more suitable.

Step 7: **Review Regularly**

Once you have made a decision, remember that your circumstances or the laws may change. Schedule regular reviews of your estate planning documents to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

General Notes

Update Will/Trust

Keep in mind that even after making a decision, certain life events such as marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, or significant changes in financial status should trigger a review and possible update to your will or trust.

State Laws

Be aware that estate planning laws can significantly differ from state to state. Always consider the state laws applicable to your situation when making estate planning decisions.