



A Note From Harriett:



Spring is one of my favorite seasons. I love seeing the new buds on the tree's and being able to get outdoors. As the flowers come into bloom and the temperature ticks upwards, you may experience a feeling of renewal. That's often what spurs people to do their spring cleaning—and it's a great idea. But while you're at it, why not do some cleaning in your "financial house" too. Even if you recently took a look at your finances as you prepared for tax season, there still may be some items that could use attention. Spring is a great time to review your budget, create a debt pay-off plan, check your credit history, review your insurance coverage and beneficiaries, and get your legal business in order; a will, living trust, etc. Also, you may want to check your 401(K)s and get financial advice on your asset allocations and/or distributions. As always, we're here to help you.



Financial Planning Newsletter - Spring



Fact or Fiction?

Fiction:

If I change jobs, it won't matter whether I move my 401(k) or other company-sponsored retirement plan assets to my new job or if I leave them with my previous employer.

Fact:



Many people don't think to move these funds (or roll them over) to an IRA upon their departure from a job. An IRA may provide such advantages as the opportunity to choose from a broader range of asset classes or more flexibility in beneficiary options. There are some restrictions on moving 401(k) funds, however. A financial professional can help you with the details.

Questions to Ask Before Hiring an Estate Planning Attorney

Before hiring an estate planning attorney, there are a variety of factors to take into account, including your own needs and concerns and the experience level of the candidates you consider. The following questions can help you arrive at the best possible decision.

Q: What is the attorney's primary expertise? Is it estate planning?

A: Whether you need a simple will or a more complex estate plan, you should work with an attorney who is experienced in estate planning matters. Even a simple estate can have unexpected complications, which an experienced estate planning attorney can help you identify and address.

Q: How many years of experience does the attorney have?

A: The more estate planning documents an attorney has put in place, the more opportunity he or she has had to see the documents in action. The wills, trusts, powers of attorney, and health care documents used by attorneys in business for years will have been revised to deal with everyday situations encountered when their clients die or incur a disability. This can give their clients peace of mind, knowing that the documents the attorney has prepared for them will be effective when they are needed.

Q: Does the attorney have a formal updating and maintenance program?

A: Many estate planning attorneys contact all of their clients once or twice a year to:
Inform them about any changes in estate law
Explain new estate planning techniques
Ask about life changes that will require modifications in client documents
Check the progress of clients who are funding their trusts

Q: Does the attorney charge a flat fee or an hourly rate for estate planning services?

A: This is an important question, as you don't want to be surprised by hidden fees and costs. Knowing what to expect will enable you to concentrate on achieving your planning goals rather than on worrying about costs.

Q: Does the attorney assist clients with properly funding assets into a revocable living trust?

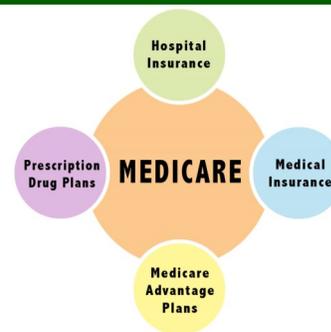
A: Ask the attorney about the level of guidance that he or she can provide in assisting you with funding your trusts. Some attorneys provide written instructions, with the expectation that their clients will handle the funding process themselves. Others may work through the entire process with their clients. Because the funding process can be long and complicated, it is highly recommended that you work with an attorney who will oversee the funding process, even if you incur an extra fee to have him or her do so.

This material has been provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute either tax or legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a tax preparer, professional tax advisor, or lawyer.

Preparing for Medicare Enrollment

Presented by Harriett Barnes

It's a few months before you turn 65. You check the mail and find the box overflowing with materials from companies discussing Medicare enrollment, Medicare Advantage plans, and other pharmacy-related plans. The amount of information is overwhelming—how will you possibly sort through it all and figure out what you need to do?



Although many third-party providers offer legitimate products and services, it's often difficult to differentiate between these marketing materials and official mailings from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. As the Medicare enrollment period approaches, it's best to map out a plan ahead of time to avoid making poor decisions.

Steps to take before you turn 65

To help ensure that you make the best Medicare choices, it's a good idea to check the following items off your list before you turn 65.

Set a reminder. When you turn 64, mark the calendar for your Medicare enrollment period. If you already receive social security or Railroad Retirement Board benefits, you will be enrolled automatically in Part A and Part B coverage on the first day of the month you turn 65. If not, you may enroll during the three months before your 65th birthday or during the three months after you turn 65. If you don't sign up for Part A, Part B, or both when you are first eligible, you can enroll between January 1 and March 31 every year, but you may be required to pay a penalty for late enrollment.

Note the special enrollment period. If you're currently covered by group insurance through an employer or a spouse's employer, you may be able to delay Medicare enrollment. Talk to your employer to determine how the group plan coordinates with Medicare. You may sign up without penalty while you are covered by a group health plan or during the eight-month period that begins the month after your employment ends or the coverage ends, whichever comes first. Note that COBRA and retiree health plans are not considered "insurance based on current employment" and are not eligible for the special enrollment period when that coverage ends.

Research Medigap and Medicare Advantage plans. It's wise to look into how Medigap and Medicare Advantage plans work and decide if either type of plan would benefit you. Here's an overview:

Sold by private companies, Medigap policies—also called Medicare Supplement Insurance policies—can help pay for some of the health care costs that original Medicare doesn't cover (e.g., copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles). Medigap policies require you to pay premiums, which are standardized according to federal and state laws. Much like HMOs or PPOs, Medicare Advantage plans (sometimes called Part C or MA plans) are health plans offered by private companies approved by Medicare. These plans provide Part A (hospital insurance) and Part B (medical insurance) coverage, not original Medicare. You can search and compare Medicare Advantage plans on the Medicare website at www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan/questions/home.aspx.

Talk to your health care providers. Unfortunately, not all health care providers accept Medicare, which is why it's essential to double-check that your physician does. Also be sure to ask if the provider accepts assignment, which means he or she will accept the Medicare-approved amount as full payment for services. This is important because, depending on the type of Medicare plan you choose to enroll in, some providers may not restrict their fees to the Medicare limit. Another benefit of assignment is that you won't have to pay up front for treatment, file a claim form, and wait for reimbursement. Instead, the health care provider will file your claims, and you will be billed only for your share of the costs, such as the deductible and coinsurance amounts.

To locate doctors near you who accept assignment, you can use Medicare's provider search, available at www.medicare.gov/find-a-doctor/provider-search.aspx.

This material has been provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute either tax or legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a tax preparer, professional tax advisor, or lawyer.

HB Financial Group is proud to be one of the sponsors for Family Outreach of Amherst's 16th Annual Light Up the Night Dinner & Auction, Friday, June 14th, 2019 at 5:30pm.

This year's Light Up the Night event will take us deep into the transformative magic of a Midsummer's Night. Lose yourself to an enchanted night of friends, food, and dancing. Over 200 guests will feast and frolic in a captivating garden. One-of-a-kind live and silent auction items, donated by generous local businesses and individuals, will be the centerpiece of the evening.

For more information, contact Nik Krauchi at (413) 548-1272 or nkrauchi@chd.org. For nearly 30 years, Family Outreach of Amherst has assisted struggling families in our community. Each year Light Up the Night raises close to half of the annual fundraising goal for FOA. Please join us for a great party and a great cause!



A 7-Point Checklist for Your Estate Plan

Presented by Harriett Barnes

When it comes to estate planning, executing your will and other estate documents is only the first step. To help ensure that your estate plan stays in tune with your goals and needs, it's important to review and update it on an ongoing basis. Working with your financial advisor and attorney, use this checklist as a starting point to keep your estate plan in good shape.

1) Check trust funding. Trusts are often used to preserve privacy, minimize estate taxes or administration expenses, or transfer assets to beneficiaries according to specific wishes. If you have executed a trust, consult with your attorney and financial advisor to determine which assets should be owned by your trust or should have the trust named as a beneficiary. Keep in mind that assets not owned by the trust will not be subject to its provisions.

2) Account for any life changes. Have you experienced personal or financial changes since you executed your estate documents—for instance, the arrival of a new family member or a significant increase in assets? If so, be sure to update your documents to reflect those changes and take advantage of asset protection measures, if necessary.

3) Update beneficiary designations. Outdated beneficiary designations can derail an estate plan. Review your designations to ensure that the correct people are named, rather than a deceased family member or ex-spouse. If your children were minors when you last reviewed your beneficiary designations, they may now be ready to receive the assets directly.

4) Review trustee and agent appointments. While reviewing your beneficiary designations, also reevaluate who you have appointed as executor of your estate, trustee of your trust, or as your agent under your powers of attorney for health care and finances. Are the people you named still ready to carry out your wishes? Will they be capable of administering your assets in an appropriate manner?

5) Review provisions of powers of attorney and health care directives. Ongoing changes to federal and state laws won't necessarily invalidate a document that's already been executed; however, such changes may limit your agent's ability to carry out his or her duties. For example, changes to privacy laws may prevent your agent from accessing pertinent medical information. To accomplish your planning goals, it may be necessary to expand your agent's authority.

6) Prepare for the distribution of personal effects. If your will includes directions for the distribution of your personal effects, consider informing your executor or administrator ahead of time and providing him or her with a copy of the list. Or you may wish to leave a separate list, if permitted under your state's law. In short, the person handling your estate should be aware of your wishes so that your personal items don't disappear on a first-come, first-served basis before the formal probate process begins.

7) Understand your documents. Ask your attorney and financial advisor as many questions as necessary to ensure that you have a clear understanding of each document in your estate plan. If it's been some time since you executed your estate plan and you can't remember something, ask again. Estate planning can be complex, but it's essential that you understand the whole process.

This material has been provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute either tax or legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a tax preparer, professional tax advisor, or lawyer.

28 Amity Street 1C
Amherst MA 01002
413-256-0677



Financial Planning Newsletter - Spring



Introducing our services to your friends and family

It has always been our belief that the most effective use of our time as financial professionals is servicing our clients. Our clients are always our first priority, and we believe that focusing on helping them pursue their financial goals is the key to building the foundation for a strong relationship. Because of our commitment to our existing clients, and in an effort to maintain the integrity of our practice, we do not actively market our services to the general public.

It is the nature of our business that most new clients enter our office as referrals from existing clients—clients who have benefited from and enjoyed the experience of working with us. We find that our clients tend to refer individuals who are like themselves: kind, good people who are serious about making smart decisions concerning their financial future. We, in turn, find it a pleasure to work with these individuals.

If you are pleased with your experience with us, we would kindly ask that you mention our name to any friends or family members who you think would be a good fit with our practice. We are looking for individuals who are searching for a trusted relationship with a financial professional and who are looking for long-term financial guidance.