

How much do you know about your parent's estate?



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One study found that more than 60% of adult Americans have never discussed their estate plans with their heirs – my experience shows this number may actually be higher.

Parents may hesitate to discuss death or incapacity for a variety of reasons. Children or grandchildren may be reluctant to broach the subject for fear of appearing greedy.

This is, however, something you need to discuss... perhaps

starting by discussing your own estate plan. Tell your parents about your wishes for your children and property should something happen to you, as well as the location of your legal documents. Often, parents will consider sharing the same information with you.

Questions to ask:

Do you have a valid will, a trust and a power of attorney in place? If not, encourage them to have these documents created right away.

Do you have an inventory of insurance policies, financial and retirement accounts, mortgages, safe-deposit boxes, Social Security benefits, etc.? If not, ask them to prepare one, and if they don't wish to share it at this time, ask them to tell you where it can be found in the event something does occur.

Ask for the names and contact information for financial advisors, attorneys, insurance agents, accountants and others who help manage their financial affairs. Ask if they have established clear beneficiaries, and contingent beneficiaries for their life insurance policies and investment and retirement accounts.

Do you have long term care insurance to provide the ongoing care most medical insurance policies and Medicare do not provide? Lack of coverage may leave you supporting and caring for your ailing parents without assistance.

Do you have letters of instruction addressing personal issues not covered by legal documents, such as instructions for burial and memorial, disposition of personal belongings, and computer passwords? Tell your loved ones you would like to make sure their wishes are carried out, and these instructions will help you do so.

Do you have an advance directive for healthcare providing instructions for medical care decisions in the event of a healthcare situation where you are unable to make decisions for yourself? Again, the goal is to ensure wishes are carried out and to remove the burden of such decisions from family members who will already be stressed by these difficult situations. This can also help avoid the added expense of legal help and court delays after someone becomes incapacitated when dealing with these issues becomes much more complicated.

Have your parents provided adequately for each other in the event of the death of one of them? Failure to do so may leave you in a position where you need to change your lifestyle to support a parent.

Inquiring and planning now may make a difficult situation far less stressful in the future.

One way to begin this discussion with your parents would be to invite them to attend one of my retirement planning classes with you. The classes are held at Gwinnett Technical College. We have a class coming up in August, and another in October. Make time to attend. Visit our website at www.rogerscottgreen.com for details.

No time for class? For further guidance with these issues, or to schedule a free meeting with you and/or your parents, please call our office at 770.931.1414 or contact another financial professional and/or an estate planning attorney for guidance.

For useful information on other financial planning topics, and observations on the market and the economy, please tune in to my weekly radio program, *Your Green*, aired Saturdays at 3:00 PM on 970 AM or live at <http://www.faithtalk970.com>. Visit our website at <http://www.rogersgreen.com> for additional helpful information. As always, we are here to help.