

A QUICK PRIMER ON IMPORTANT ESTATE DOCUMENTS



There are many aspects to a successful estate plan, but four documents are especially important: Your Power of Attorney, your Advanced Medical Directive, your Letter of Instructions, and of course, your Will. Having each of these important documents prepared ahead of time can relieve your family of needless worry, speculation, and expense. Below is a brief overview of each of these documents, what they do, and why they matter.



POWER OF ATTORNEY

Your PoA allows you to appoint someone to act on your behalf to make legal decisions about your property and finances. That person, usually referred to as an “agent”, could be a trusted friend, a family member, or an experienced, reputable professional.

Power of attorney is crucial should you ever become ill or disabled to the point where you can no longer make important decisions yourself. Keep in mind, however, that granting someone power of attorney is a huge decision in and of itself. Give careful thought before making your choice. Whomever you select should be trustworthy, reliable, and mature enough to handle the responsibility.

MEDICAL DIRECTIVES

A second document is your Advance Medical Directive. This catch-all term refers to health care directives, living wills, health care (medical) powers of attorney, and other personalized directives. All of these documents allow you to legally express your preference for continued health care should you become terminally ill.

A word of advice: make sure you have completed your HIPPA Release Forms as well. By doing this, you enable the individuals named in your Advanced Health Care Directive to have access to your healthcare information. This way, they can deal with insurance matters on your behalf at a time when you cannot.

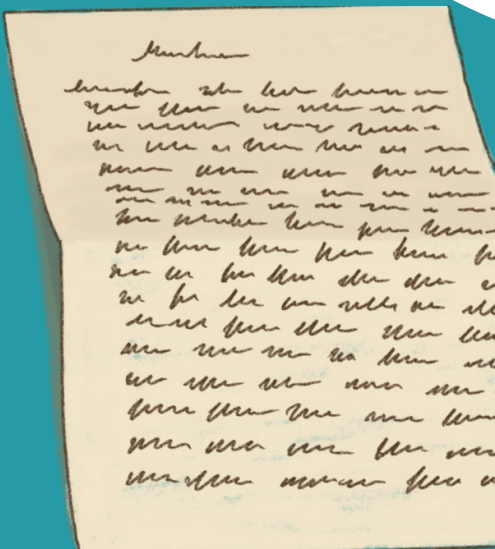
LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS

This is a document giving your survivors information about important financial and personal matters to attend to after your passing. You don't need an attorney to prepare it. Although it doesn't carry the legal weight of a will, and is in no way a substitute, your Letter of Instructions will clarify any special requests you want carried out after death.

YOUR WILL

Finally, of course, we have your will. A will states how you want your belongings divided up amongst your loved ones after you pass away. Otherwise, the government will determine how to distribute your property, which may even end up belonging to the state if you don't have an appropriate will stating otherwise.

Just as important as *having* a will is *keeping it updated*. Just as your life is always changing, your will must change with it whenever appropriate.



If you have any questions about your estate plan, or need help getting any of these documents in order, please don't hesitate to contact my office! I am always happy to answer your questions.

