

GRISSOM PLUMMER LAW

WHEN SHOULD I UPDATE MY ESTATE PLAN? IMPORTANT LIFE CHANGES YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE

Your Life Changes. Shouldn't Your Estate Plan?

Creating an estate plan is an important step toward protecting your family, your assets, and your future. But estate planning is not a one-time task. As your life evolves, your estate plan should evolve with it.

A will, trust, Power of Attorney, or other estate planning document that once reflected your wishes may no longer meet your needs after a major life change. Without regular reviews, your documents may name people you would no longer choose, fail to account for newly acquired assets, or leave important decisions unanswered.

At Grissom Plummer Law, PLLC, we understand that every family has unique needs and goals. Reviewing your estate plan periodically can help ensure that your wishes remain clear and that your loved ones are prepared for the future.

So, when should you update your estate plan? Here are some important situations to consider.

1. After Marriage or Divorce

Marriage can significantly change your financial responsibilities, family relationships, and long-term plans. You may want to update your will, trust, beneficiary designations, and Powers of Attorney to reflect your new circumstances.

Divorce is another important reason to review your estate planning documents. You may wish to change who receives your assets, who manages your estate, or who is authorized to make financial or healthcare decisions on your behalf.

Why it matters: Do not assume that every document or beneficiary designation automatically changes to reflect your current wishes after a marriage or divorce. The legal effect of these events depends on the document and applicable law.

2. When You Welcome a Child or Grandchild

The birth or adoption of a child often changes how you think about the future. Parents may need to consider naming a guardian for minor children in their will and deciding how assets should be managed if a child inherits property before reaching adulthood.

You may also want to review your life insurance, trust provisions, and beneficiary designations to ensure they align with your family's needs.

Grandparents may also wish to revisit their estate plans to consider gifts, inheritances, or trust arrangements for grandchildren.

Why it matters: An updated estate plan can provide clearer instructions about who should care for your children and how financial resources should be managed for their benefit.

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3. When Someone Named in Your Documents Passes Away or Can No Longer Serve

Your estate plan may identify individuals to serve as your executor, trustee, financial agent, or healthcare agent. These are important responsibilities that require someone you trust and who is willing and able to act.

If one of these individuals passes away, becomes incapacitated, or is no longer an appropriate choice, you should review your documents to determine whether a replacement is needed.

It is also worth reviewing your beneficiaries after the death of a spouse, relative, or other person named in your plan.

Why it matters: Naming appropriate backup individuals can help reduce uncertainty and make it easier for your loved ones to carry out your wishes when the time comes.

4. When Your Financial Situation Changes

Your financial circumstances may look very different today than they did when you first created your estate plan.

You may have purchased a home, acquired investment property, started a business, received an inheritance, or accumulated additional savings and retirement assets. You may also have experienced a significant financial setback.

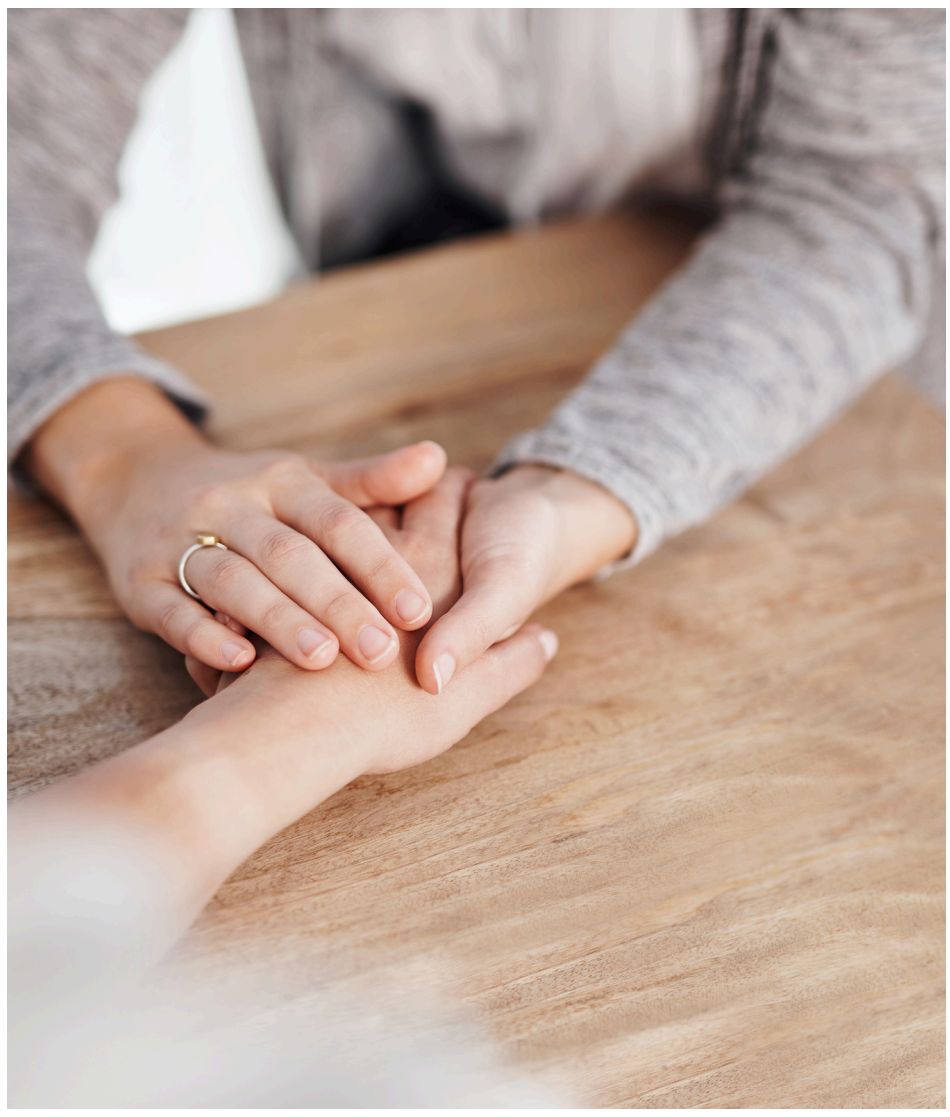
These changes can affect how your assets should be managed and distributed. If you have a trust, you should also review whether newly acquired assets need to be transferred into it, depending on your plan and the type of asset involved.

Why it matters: An estate plan should reflect what you own today, how those assets are held, and how you want them handled in the future.

5. When You Move to Another State

Moving to a new state is another reason to review your estate planning documents.

A will, trust, or Power of Attorney prepared in another state may still be recognized in North Carolina, but the applicable legal requirements and practical considerations may differ.



Documents that were validly prepared elsewhere may also need review to determine whether they continue to accomplish your goals.

If you move to North Carolina from another state—or relocate from North Carolina to another state—consider having a qualified estate planning attorney review your existing documents.

Why it matters: A review can help identify provisions that may need updating to reflect your new residence, property ownership, or applicable state law.

6. When Your Health or Caregiving Responsibilities Change

Changes in your health or the health of someone you care for may affect your estate planning priorities.

You may need to review your Healthcare Power of Attorney, Advance Directive, HIPAA authorization, or financial Power of Attorney. These documents can help establish who may make certain decisions or access information if you become unable to communicate or manage your affairs.

If you are helping an aging parent, you may also need to discuss whether that parent has appropriate documents in place and whether their chosen decisionmakers are still suitable.

Why it matters: Planning ahead can help your family understand your preferences and identify the individuals you trust to assist when needed.



7. When You Retire or Your Long-Term Goals Change

Retirement often brings changes in income, assets, living arrangements, and family priorities. You may decide to travel more, downsize your home, support family members financially, or leave a charitable gift.

These changes may affect how you want your assets distributed and who should manage your affairs.
Even if you are not retiring, changes in your personal goals may be a good reason to revisit your estate plan.

Why it matters: Your plan should reflect your current priorities, not simply the goals you had when you first created it.

8. When It Has Been Several Years Since Your Last Review

Even if you have not experienced a major life event, it is wise to review your estate plan periodically.

As a general guideline, consider reviewing your documents every three to five years, or sooner if your circumstances change. A review does not necessarily mean you need to replace everything. Sometimes, a few targeted updates may be sufficient.

You should also check whether your beneficiary designations on retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and other accounts remain consistent with your overall plan.

Why it matters: Regular reviews help you identify outdated information, changes in your goals, and provisions that may need attention.

WHAT SHOULD YOU REVIEW IN YOUR ESTATE PLAN?

When reviewing your documents, consider the following checklist:

- **Last Will and Testament:** Are your beneficiaries and executor still appropriate? Do your instructions reflect your current wishes?
- **Trust**: Does it still meet your goals? Have the appropriate assets been transferred into the trust where necessary?
- **Financial Power of Attorney**: Is your chosen agent still someone you trust to handle financial matters?
- **Healthcare Power of Attorney**: Is your designated healthcare agent still the right person?
- **Advance Directive**: Do your instructions still reflect your healthcare preferences?
- **Beneficiary designations**: Are your retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and other beneficiary-designated assets consistent with your intentions?
- **Guardianship provisions**: If you have minor children, do your arrangements still reflect whom you would want to care for them?

Remember that different assets and documents may be governed by different rules. Before making changes, consider how each update may affect the rest of your estate plan.

Why Work With an Estate Planning Attorney?

Life changes can affect your estate plan. An estate planning attorney can review your documents, identify necessary updates, and help ensure your plan reflects your current wishes and complies with North Carolina law.

At Grissom Plummer Law, PLLC, we help individuals and families in Charlotte, Raleigh, and surrounding communities plan for the future with confidence.

Contact Grissom Plummer Law, PLLC, to discuss your estate planning needs. Your Legacy. Our Commitment.

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