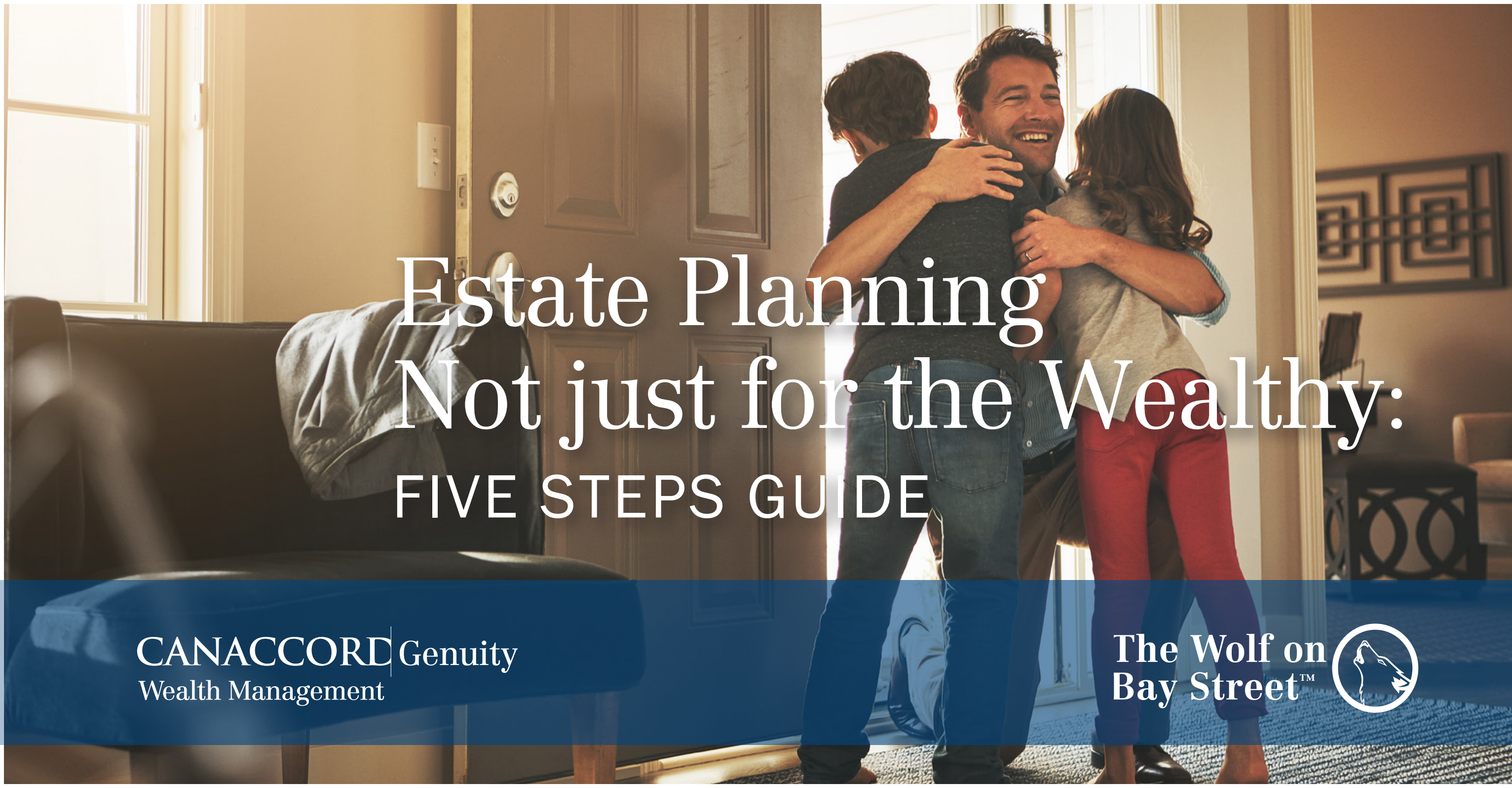

Estate Planning Not just for the Wealthy:

FIVE STEPS GUIDE

"For many people, creating an estate plan is a task that routinely gets pushed to the bottom of the pile, yet, almost everyone should have an estate plan" – Fidelity Viewpoints section posted a very informative piece on how to plan for your financial future; I thought I would share with you its main points:

With the help of legal and financial professionals, drafting an estate plan is probably easier than you think. Experienced advisors can help make sure you don't miss any important pieces and that your estate plan addresses all your needs.

Here are five steps to get you on the right track:

1. Establish a power of attorney.

A power of attorney is a legal document that grants another person the ability to make financial decisions for you in the event that you become incapacitated. Such decisions may include opening your mail, contacting your banks, transferring your assets, and paying your bills, if needed. He or she doesn't need to be a financial whiz, but you should trust this person to make pragmatic and thoughtful decisions on your behalf.

A medical power of attorney holder will be able to make medical decisions on your behalf. This person will use your living will as a guide for determining the care you desire. Many people designate a spouse or parent in this role. Whomever you choose, have a discussion to gain mutual understanding of your medical preferences.

2. Create a living will.

Your estate plan can provide guidance for your loved ones regarding your preferences for end-of-life medical intervention; in case you can't communicate for yourself it will address instructions for handling life-prolonging treatments and artificial life support or do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders among others. Make sure you send a copy to your primary care physician to ensure that your living will is easily accessible and becomes part of your medical record.

3. Make a last will and testament.

Your will is a crucial component of your estate plan – it outlines who will receive your assets after your death. If you have minor children, it also designates who will be their guardian. Without a will, a judge likely will make both of these determinations. To draft up your will contact an experienced attorney, who can walk you through the process. Furthermore, consult with your financial advisor to help you inventory and organize your financial assets.

You'll also need to designate an executor—the person or institution who will oversee the management of your estate and will carry out the instructions of your will. Their tasks may include taking inventory of your assets, selling your property, and paying your taxes. In selecting an executor, choose someone you view as trustworthy and willing to take on the responsibilities of being the executor of your estate.

4. Consider creating a Trust

Having a Trust can give you more control as to how assets are distributed and allow you to keep the details of your assets out of the public eye after you die. In addition, trusts can potentially reduce the taxes owed by your estate and heirs, protect your assets from creditors and lawsuits, and put conditions on how and when your assets are distributed.

There are many kinds of trusts, each with specific advantages and disadvantages. The most common is a living trust, which lets you retain control of the assets you place in the trust while you're alive, then transfers them to your beneficiaries after your death.

If you do establish a trust, you'll need to name a trustee whose responsibilities include managing the assets, ongoing administration and tax filings for the trust, as well as making distributions to beneficiaries according to the terms of the trust.

5. Update your estate plan regularly.

Creating an estate plan is a great accomplishment, however keeping it up-to-date is just as important so that it continues to reflect your wishes and needs, which may change along with your family and finances. Experts recommend reviewing your estate plan every two to five years, and updating it after major life events, including marriage and remarriage, divorce, births or adoptions, and deaths. Changes in your financial goals; purchases of large assets such as a home; or major financial events such as a bankruptcy, retirement, or business sale, are also important milestones that justify a review of your estate plan.

Procrastinating on creating an estate plan is certainly tempting. But having a well-conceived plan is more than worth the time and money it will take to build it.

Five steps to create an estate plan, accessed 2 June 2016, < www.fidelity.com/viewpoints/personal-finance/estate-planning-made-easy?ccsource=email_weekly>.

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