

Five Estate Planning Documents You Should Know Where to Find

Adult children don't often talk to their parent(s) about medical prognoses, retirement savings, funeral arrangements or other undisclosed personal affairs because many older adults still believe it's taboo to share these private details with someone other than a spouse.

Details may be hard to come by, but it's essential to [break the silence](#) and begin the discussion with your parent(s) to learn about their current medical conditions, long-term care wishes and estate plans. Proper planning now avoids conflict and uncertainty among family members during a crisis.

It may not be an easy conversation, but ask for the location of the following documents:

Power of Attorney. Also referred to as a POA. Your parent designates someone to perform specific legal acts, such as financial and health care decisions, on their behalf. Your parent should consult an attorney for specific legal advice.

Advance Directives. Also called a living will, is a combination of documents from Do Not Resuscitate or Do Not Intubate orders, to other written instructions regarding medical treatment that inform health care providers and family members about your loved one's end-of-life wishes.

Will and Living Trust. A legal document that specifies your parent's last wishes by appointing beneficiaries, such as a loved one, charity or organization to receive certain possessions/assets upon their death.

Insurance Policies. Verify the status on all applicable insurance policies—life, home, auto, long-term care, etc. Premiums should be current and beneficiaries assigned as needed.

Personal Documents. Create a binder, folder or computer file that can be safely and conveniently stored, which contains your loved one's:

- Medical history with a current list of medications and doses.
- Financial records, including locations of banking institutions, account numbers, credit card accounts, outstanding debts, and investment portfolios with advisor's contact information.
- Military discharge paperwork and veteran benefits.
- Pre-planned funeral arrangements.
- Deeds to home and/or land.
- Auto and recreational vehicle titles.
- Birth certificates and marriage licenses.
- Passwords to mobile devices, computer logins, social media sites, payment portals, emails, etc.

You can learn valuable insight from your parents by starting the conversation about their future care plans now. Does Mom expect you or a sibling to be their caregiver or does she want to move to a senior living community? Does Dad want a final salute with military honors or does he want a quiet memorial service? If you need help getting started, AARP publishes a book entitled "Checklist for My Family" that is a great resource.