



## INTRODUCTION TO ESTATE PLANNING

### ***What Is Estate Planning?***

In a nutshell, estate planning is planning for what will happen in the event of your death or disability and putting in place the necessary legal instruments to accomplish your objectives. Specifically, an estate plan is designed to answer some or all of the following questions, among others:

- Who will receive my assets upon my death?
- Who will take care of my children upon my death?
- Will my children have unlimited and unsupervised access to inherited money at eighteen (18) years of age?
- Who will make financial decisions for me if I become incapacitated?
- Who will make health care decision for me if I become incapacitated?
- How do I wish to be treated if I am in a persistent vegetative state or terminal condition?

### ***Do I Need an Estate Plan?***

In short, yes. Everyone needs an estate plan of some kind. In a very real sense, everyone has an “estate plan” of sorts already, whether they know it or not, as a result of various provisions of the law that govern when there is no legal instrument in place. The real question is: do I want to have a say in what my estate plan provides? Without a formal estate plan, your estate plan effectively says, in part: “Upon my death, without regard to my wishes or desires: my assets will be distributed as provided by law; a judge will decide who takes care of my children; my children will be able to have unrestricted use of life insurance and other money when they turn eighteen (18); and I wish to pay the maximum possible amount in estate taxes to the government leaving less for my loved ones.”

### ***How Does an Estate Plan Relate to My Financial Plan?***

A good estate plan should complement your financial plan, and vice versa. Just as an estate plan helps put the legal framework in place to deal with your death or disability, it is also necessary to consider the financial implications of death or disability and put the appropriate financial framework in place. Depending on your circumstances, this may include obtaining financial instruments to plan for your death and disability (e.g., life, disability, and long-term care insurance). If you have a financial planner, we would be happy to work with him or her to coordinate your estate and financial plans.



**David M. Knasel**  
Business & Estate Attorney

(703) 436-6500  
dmk@dominionlegalplc.com  
Dominionlegalplc.com