



Estate Planning Tasks to Complete Before Going on Vacation

Vacation season is upon us. You've packed your suitcase, stopped the mail and watered the plants. You're ready to hit the road for vacation with your family. But wait. There may be something you've forgotten. You may have forgotten to update (or create) your estate plan. Doing so before you travel can help you feel like you've earned the right to relax during your trip and can certainly help in case of emergency.

If you already have a will, take a look at it and make sure it's current. Get in touch with your attorney if you need to update it. If you haven't started one, now is a good time to get it done. Here are other items to consider:

- 1) Designate guardians for minor children -- If you have children under the age of eighteen, you should name a guardian to physically take care of them in the event something happens to you. A will is the most common document used to name a physical guardian.
- 2) Establish advance directives – such as a living will or health care power of attorney. This sets out your wishes for medical treatment should you be unable to make those decisions yourself, and names someone to make decisions on your behalf.
- 3) HIPAA authorization – A separate signed HIPAA authorization allows the person of your choice to have access to your medical records, because a health care power of attorney only takes over if you are declared incompetent. You may need someone else to access your health information for other reasons.
- 4) Set up a Power of Attorney. Many people set up a durable power of attorney – a document that authorizes someone else to handle your business and financial affairs, should you become ill, but also if you are out of town for an extended period and cannot handle important matters that arise.
- 5) Life insurance – Be sure your life insurance policies are up to date before traveling, especially regarding your named beneficiaries. You may wish to take another look at other policies, such as auto and homeowners, to check that they are up-to-date as well.
- 6) Digital assets – You should think about your online life and digital legacy as well. You may consider making provisions for your email and social media accounts, as well as any websites you own or operate. Make sure your wishes – and your logins and passwords – are recorded in a safe place.
- 7) Share your information -- Make sure all your documents are updated and stored safely where family members can assess them. A home safe or fireproof box are good options. Be sure to tell your loved ones where to find this information should they need to do so.

For assistance with updating your estate planning documents, please contact Colombo Kitchin Attorneys at 252-321-2020.