Estate Planning Guide

A Practical Guide to Protecting the People and Causes You Care About

Curry Senior Center

Dear Friend,

Creating or updating your estate plan is one of the most thoughtful gifts you can give the people you love. It helps ensure your wishes are honored, provides peace of mind for you and your family, and can ease the burden on those who will one day carry out your plans.

At Curry Senior Center, we have spent more than 50 years helping older adults in San Francisco's Tenderloin live with greater dignity, stability, and hope. We understand the importance of planning ahead—not only for today, but for the future.

Whether you are creating your first estate plan or updating an existing one, this guide will help you organize important information, identify your goals, and prepare for conversations with your loved ones and professional advisors. By taking a few simple steps now, you can make the estate planning process easier, more efficient, and more meaningful.

After providing for your loved ones, we hope you will consider remembering Curry Senior Center in your estate plan. Your generosity can help ensure that older adults in the Tenderloin continue to find more than services. They continue to find Curry.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your planning journey.

Sincerely,

David Knego, MSW

Executive Director

About This Guide

A well-crafted estate plan is one of the greatest gifts you can leave your loved ones. It provides clear direction, protects your wishes, and helps ensure that your family and the causes you care about are provided for according to your intentions.

This guide is designed to help you gather important information before meeting with your attorney or other professional advisor. Completing it can simplify the planning process, reduce unnecessary costs, and give you confidence that your wishes are clearly documented.

Benefits of an Estate Plan

Peace
An estate plan provides peace of mind by ensuring your wishes are clearly documented and your loved ones understand your intentions.

Protection
An estate plan protects you and your family by documenting your healthcare wishes and authorizing trusted individuals to make financial and medical decisions if you become unable to do so.

Provision
An estate plan helps ensure your assets are transferred efficiently to the people and organizations you choose, while minimizing unnecessary costs and delays.

Four Steps to Creating Your Estate Plan

1. Write Down Important Information
Begin by gathering key information about yourself, your loved ones, and your assets. Use this guide to record all essential details so that you can ensure your assets are distributed exactly as you intend.

2. Consult with Qualified Professionals
You may wish to consult with an estate planning attorney or other qualified professional who can help draft the necessary legal documents—whether a will, trust, or medical directive. Bring your completed guide to your meeting for a thorough and confidential discussion. Online resources are also available to help you create a will or trust at no or low cost.

3. Review Your Plan
Review your estate plan carefully with your attorney to ensure every detail reflects your priorities. A well-structured plan will efficiently transfer your property to your chosen beneficiaries through the appropriate legal channels.

4. Be Sure to Sign Required Documents
Finalize your estate plan by signing all required documents. Remember, some states require your signature to be witnessed or notarized. Your attorney will guide you through these legal requirements to ensure your plan is valid.

Estate Planning Documents

Most estate plans include several important legal documents. The documents described below form the foundation of many estate plans.

1. Last Will and Testament

Your will is a written document that specifies how your assets will be distributed after your passing. Key points include:

Formal Requirements:
Your will must be signed by you and typically witnessed by at least two individuals (or notarized in some states).

Asset Distribution:
When accepted by the probate court, your will directs the distribution of your property according to your wishes. Without a will, state law will determine asset distribution and the appointment of guardians for minor children.

Executor and Guardian Appointments:
With a will, you can choose who will serve as your executor (or personal representative) and, if applicable, designate a guardian for your minor children.

Potential Trust Provisions:
Your will may include trust provisions and the appointment of a trustee to manage assets under certain conditions.

Cost and Conflict Reduction:
A clear will can help minimize delays, reduce legal expenses, and prevent unnecessary conflicts among your loved ones.

2. Healthcare Directives

Healthcare directives ensure that your medical wishes are followed if you become unable to make decisions yourself. They typically include:

Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare:
This document allows you to appoint a trusted person to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are incapacitated.

Living Will:
This separate document outlines your preferences for end-of-life care, including decisions regarding nutrition, hydration, and resuscitation.

Advance Directive:
In some states, these documents are combined into a single comprehensive advance directive, covering both healthcare and end-of-life preferences.

These directives ensure that you receive the type of care you desire and guide healthcare providers during critical times.

3. Durable Power of Attorney for Finances

A durable power of attorney for finances ensures that your financial matters are managed according to your wishes, particularly if you become incapacitated:

Appointment of a Financial Representative:
This document authorizes you to designate a trusted person to manage your financial affairs and personal obligations when you are unable to do so.

Avoiding Court Intervention:
Without a durable power of attorney, a court may appoint a conservator who might not understand your values or goals and could impose additional costs through mandatory reports or audits.

Protection of Your Assets:
By selecting someone you trust, you ensure that your property is well cared for and that your bills and financial commitments are managed efficiently.

Estate Planning Documents Checklist

Please check which documents you already have and note the last update date:

☐ Will

☐Living Will / Advance Directive

☐ Revocable Living Trust

☐ Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare

☐ Durable Power of Attorney for Finances

Last Updated: ___________________________________

Your Estate Planning Goals

You may have several goals you want to accomplish through your estate plan. Listed below are common objectives. Please indicate how important each goal is to you by checking the appropriate box, where **1** is low importance and **5** is high importance.

GOAL	1 Low	2	3	4	5 High
Provide for spouse or children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provide for guardianship of minors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provide for healthcare if disabled	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reduce estate taxes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase current income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provide for charitable causes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Plan for business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other: ______________________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Personal Information

Fill in your personal details below:

Your Full Legal Name:

____

Date of Birth:

____

Social Security Number:

____

Home Address:

____

City: ___________________ *State:* ______ *ZIP:* ______

Contact Information:

Home Phone: ______________________

Cell Phone: _______________________

Email: ____

Employment Information:

Employer/Address: ____

Work Phone: ________________________

Job Title: ___________________________

Marital Status:

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Legally Separated ☐ Divorced

If previously married, please provide details:

____

Family Information

Spouse (if applicable):

Full Legal Name:

____

Date of Birth:

____

Social Security Number:

____

Contact Information:

Home Phone: ______________________

Cell Phone: ________________________

Email: ____

Additional Information (e.g., prenuptial agreement):

☐ Yes ☐ No

(If yes, attach a copy)

____

Children

Do you have children?

☐ Yes ☐ No

For each child, please complete the following:

Child 1:

Full Legal Name: ____________________________________

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Date of Birth: ____________________

Social Security Number: ____________________

Home Address: ____________________________________

Relationship / Notes (e.g., adopted, foster, exclude from plan):

____

Child 2:

Full Legal Name: ____________________________________

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Date of Birth: ____________________

Social Security Number: ____________________

Home Address: ____________________________________

Relationship / Notes:

____

(Add additional pages as needed)

Executor, Guardian & Power of Attorney

Your will allows you to designate an executor—an individual who will manage and distribute your estate after you pass away. Because the executor makes key decisions about your assets, it's essential to choose someone you trust, who shares your values, and who can diligently follow your wishes. A reliable executor will take the necessary steps to ensure your property is transferred smoothly to the intended beneficiaries.

Primary Executor:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: ______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Alternate Executor:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: ______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Guardian for Minor Children (if applicable)

Primary Guardian:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: ______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Alternate Guardian:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: ______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Power of Attorney for Finances

Primary:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: ______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Alternate:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: _______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Power of Attorney for Healthcare

Primary:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: _______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Alternate:

Name: ___________________________________

Email: _______________________________

Address: ___________________________________

City: _______________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Home Phone: ______________________

Relationship: _____________________

Assets and Liabilities

Assets

List each asset along with its value. Indicate if the asset is:

☐ Joint Property ☐ Your Property ☐ Spouse's Property

Example Entry:
Asset Description: ______________________________
Value: $________________
(Repeat as needed)

Liabilities

List each liability and its amount. Indicate if the debt is:

☐ Joint Debt ☐ Your Debt ☐ Spouse's Debt

Example Entry:
Liability Description: ____________________________
Amount: $________________
(Repeat as needed)

Total Estate Value (Assets minus Liabilities):
$________________

Online Accounts

Ensure your digital legacy is secure and accessible by following these steps:

Compile a Comprehensive List:
Record all online accounts—including personal, financial, business, and social media—with usernames, passwords, and relevant details. Update the list whenever you change any credentials.

Secure Your Account Information:
Do not include login details in your will. Instead, store this list on a secure memory drive in a home safe or use password-protected software on your device.

Designate an Online Executor:
Appoint a trusted person to manage your online accounts. Note that platforms (such as social media, email, or banks) may have specific requirements for access. Consult your attorney to ensure proper authorization.

Provide Clear Instructions:
Write a detailed letter to your designated online executor outlining tasks—such as downloading and preserving digital photos and files—to ensure your digital assets are managed according to your wishes.

Example Entry:

Account Name: ___________________________

Username: _______________________________

Password Secure Storage Location: _________________________

(Add additional accounts as needed)

Distributing Personal Property

Instead of amending your entire will or trust every time your personal belongings change, many states allow you to reference a separate, updatable list within your estate plan. This list can assign specific items—like jewelry, silver, china, furniture, and collectibles—to designated beneficiaries. It offers flexibility: you can easily update it as needed without incurring the costs of a full estate plan revision. Just be sure to meet your state's formalities (such as signing, dating, or including required language) to ensure the list is legally valid. Always consult your attorney to tailor this approach to your needs.

Beneficiary Designation for Gifts

A beneficiary designation offers a simple, cost-effective way to leave a gift. You can name a family member, friend, or organization as the beneficiary of your retirement, investment, bank account, or life insurance policy. This method allows you to maintain full control of your account during your lifetime while streamlining your estate planning and avoiding costly legal fees.

To set up a beneficiary designation, contact your account custodian or trustee to obtain the appropriate form. Complete, sign, and return the form so that, upon your passing, your account or policy proceeds are transferred directly to your designated beneficiary.

For charitable gifts, beneficiary designations are especially flexible—you can update your choice at any time, even after the form is completed. This makes it one of the most adaptable ways to support the causes you care about.

Estate Planning Options

There is no single estate plan that is right for everyone. The best approach depends on your family situation, the nature of your assets, and your personal goals. Your attorney can help determine which planning tools are most appropriate for your circumstances.

Simple Will

A simple will is often appropriate for single individuals or surviving spouses with relatively straightforward estates. It allows you to:

- Designate specific gifts to family members, friends, or charitable organizations.
- Determine how the remainder of your estate will be distributed.
- Name an executor to administer your estate.
- Appoint a guardian for minor children, if needed.

A well-drafted will provides clear direction and can help reduce unnecessary costs, delays, and family disagreements.

Revocable Living Trust

A revocable living trust may be appropriate if you own significant assets, wish to simplify the transfer of property, or want to avoid probate. Depending on your circumstances, a trust may also:

- Provide for management of your assets if you become incapacitated.
- Help maintain privacy, since trusts generally are not part of the public probate process.
- Simplify the administration of your estate for your loved ones.

An attorney can help you determine whether a revocable living trust is appropriate for your situation.

Trust Planning for Minor Children or Other Loved Ones

A trust can also provide long-term financial protection for children, grandchildren, or other loved ones who may not yet be prepared to manage an inheritance or who have special circumstances.

Rather than distributing assets outright, a trustee manages and distributes funds according to the instructions you establish in your estate plan. A trust can help provide for education, healthcare, living expenses, and other important needs over time.

If selected, provide Trustee Information below:

Trustee Name: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________

City: __________ State: ____ ZIP: ______

Contact: __________________________

Charitable Giving Through Your Estate Plan

Many people choose to include charitable organizations in their estate plans after providing for their loved ones. Depending on your circumstances, charitable gifts may be made through:

- A gift in your will or trust
- A beneficiary designation on a retirement account or life insurance policy
- A charitable remainder trust or other planned giving arrangement

Your attorney or other professional advisor can help determine which approach best supports your financial goals and charitable interests.

Planning Specific Bequests

For gifts of specific items or amounts, list each bequest below.

Bequest Entry 1:

Item/Amount: ___________________________

Recipient Name: ___________________________

City/State: ___________________________

Designation: ☐ Family ☐ Charity

Bequest Entry 2:

Item/Amount: ___________________________

Recipient Name: ___________________________

City/State: ___________________________

Designation: ☐ Family ☐ Charity

Residue Allocation:

Percentage to Family: ______ %

Percentage to Charity: ______ %

(Add additional entries as needed)

Sample Bequest Language

The following examples illustrate common charitable bequest provisions. Your attorney can adapt this language to reflect your wishes and the charitable organization(s) you choose to support.

Bequest of a Specific Dollar Amount:
"I hereby give, devise, and bequeath $________ to [Organization Name], located at ___________________, for its general purposes."

Bequest of Specific Personal Property:
"I hereby give, devise, and bequeath [Description of Property] to [Organization Name], located at ___________________, for its general purposes."

Bequest of Specific Real Estate:
"I hereby give, devise, and bequeath the real estate located at ___________________ to [Organization Name], located at ___________________, for its general purposes."

Bequest of a Percentage of the Estate:
"I hereby give, devise, and bequeath ______% of my estate to [Organization Name], located at ___________________, for its general purposes."

Additional Notes

Use this section for any further instructions or special considerations (e.g., care instructions for pets):

Completion

Congratulations on taking an important step toward organizing your personal and financial information. Whether you are preparing to create an estate plan, updating an existing one, or simply gathering information for the future, completing this guide can help you clarify your wishes and make future planning easier.

Keep this guide with your other important documents and review it from time to time as your family, finances, or priorities change. If and when you decide to create or update your estate plan, you may find it helpful to share this information with your attorney or other professional advisor.

My attorney or trusted advisor:

Name: ______________________
Address:______________________
Phone: ______________________
Email: ______________________

Remembering Curry Senior Center in Your Estate Plan

For more than 50 years, Curry Senior Center has helped older adults in San Francisco's Tenderloin find more than services. They have found a community where they are known, respected, and supported—a place where dignity is protected, belonging is real, and the familiar voice of Curry is recognized—and reassuring.

After providing for your loved ones, we hope you will consider remembering Curry Senior Center in your estate plan. A gift through your will, trust, retirement account, or beneficiary designation can help ensure that, for generations to come, seniors in the Tenderloin continue to find more than services. They continue to find Curry.

If you choose to remember Curry Senior Center in your estate plan, thank you. The following information and sample bequest language may be helpful to you and your attorney when preparing your charitable bequest.

Organization Information

Legal Name: Curry Senior Center

Address: 315 Turk Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Federal Tax ID (EIN): 23-7362588

Sample Bequest Language

I give (____ percent of my estate; the sum of $____; the following property: _________) to Curry Senior Center, 315 Turk Street, San Francisco, CA 94102 (Tax ID: 23-7362588) for its general purposes.