

# Six Cornerstone Estate Planning Documents

At Jennifer Porter Law, PLLC, we collaborate with you to strategize the allocation of your assets throughout your life and beyond. Crafting and implementing a contingency plan should you become incapacitated is critical to our process. While estate plans differ according to individual circumstances, six fundamental documents form the foundation of every estate plan.

## The 6 Essential Documents for Estate Planning

These six essential documents are designed to oversee your financial and healthcare decisions should you become unable to make them yourself, in addition to facilitating a smooth transfer of your assets to your chosen beneficiaries after your demise. Below, we detail the purpose and objectives of these six critical documents within an estate plan.

- 1 Will:**  
A will is a legal document that outlines how your assets should be distributed after your death. It can also appoint a guardian for minor children. The will goes through probate, a court-supervised process to distribute the deceased's estate.
- 2 Trust:**  
A trust is a fiduciary arrangement allowing a trustee to hold assets on behalf of a beneficiary or beneficiaries. Trusts can be arranged in many ways, and the trust creator can specify how and when assets are distributed. Unlike wills, trusts bypass the probate process, offering a more private and potentially faster distribution of assets.

### **3 Durable Power of Attorney (POA):**

This document grants someone else the authority to act on your behalf in legal and financial matters if you become incapacitated and unable to handle them yourself. The "durable" part means that the POA remains in effect even if you become incapacitated.

### **4 Health Care Power of Attorney:**

Also known as a health care proxy, this designates someone to make health care decisions on your behalf if you cannot. This can include decisions about medical treatments, health care providers, and some end-of-life care.

### **5 HIPAA Authorization:**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) keeps your health information private. A HIPAA Authorization form allows designated individuals to receive your health information. This can be crucial for the person you've appointed as your healthcare proxy to make informed decisions about your care.

### **6 Advanced Health Care Directive:**

An advanced health care directive, also known as a living will, is an advance directive specifying your wishes regarding medical treatment at the end of your life. It guides your health care proxy and doctors in decisions about life support and other therapies based on your values and preferences.

## **Why These Documents Matter**

Each document serves a specific role in ensuring your wishes are honored and your loved ones are protected. Together, they provide comprehensive protection for your financial assets and well-being. At Jennifer Porter Law, PLLC, we understand that each client's situation is unique. We work closely with you to tailor these documents to your needs and goals, ensuring your estate plan is as effective and efficient as possible.