

Think About Estate Planning "Check List"

Submitted by Greg Patterson of Edward G. Jones

You may think it's too soon to do estate planning. Yet none of us can predict the future, so you'll want to be prepared for anything. Where do you begin? Consider developing an estate planning "check list." Here's one to consider:

Assemble your estate-planning team

Your estate-planning team can include an investment professional, an attorney, a tax professional, an insurance consultant, and you. Use this team to help you complete the following steps.

Identify your objectives

Your first step is to set out some broad goals, such as these: Distribute assets fairly to your family members, designate someone to handle your financial affairs if you become incapacitated. Support charitable, religious or educational institutions. Name a guardian to take care of your minor children, should you and your spouse die prematurely

Create a list of all your assets

You'll need an accurate list of all the assets you own, as well as the registration of these assets and any beneficiary designations associated with them. Ask your investment representative or attorney if he or she can provide a document that will help in organizing this information.

Create the legal papers you'll need

Estate planning can involve a variety of legal documents. Here are some of the most common ones: *Will* - Insures that your assets transfer in the manner that you choose.

Revocable living trust - Assists in distributing assets to beneficiaries, protecting assets, carrying out your wishes if you become incapacitated and minimizing estate taxes.

Durable power of attorney - Names someone to make financial and health care decisions on your behalf should you become unable to do so.

Health care directive/living will - Provides evidence of your wishes regarding the administering of life-prolonging procedures when you are no longer able to communicate.

Estimate estate taxes

Your taxable estate consists of the value of your gross estate - including your savings, investments, real estate, insurance policies, retirement plans, etc. - less any deductions. In 2005, you can pass along up to \$1.5 million of your estate, free of federal estate taxes, to your heirs. This estate tax exclusion rises gradually over the next several years.

Explore ways to reduce estate taxes

Here are a few widely used strategies for lowering estate taxes: *Giftng* - You can give up to \$11,000 per year, to as many people as you choose, free of gift taxes.

Establish "bypass trust" - When created, your assets will "detour" past your

surviving spouse's taxable estate - so you may protect up to \$3 million in assets (\$1.5 million each in estate tax exclusions) from estate taxes. This figure will rise as the exclusion increases. *Create "irrevocable life insurance trust"* - By putting your life insurance policies into an irrevocable trust, you can avoid estate taxes on the proceeds - which could be a considerable part of your taxable estate.

Appoint a qualified individual or professional to manage your estate

You'll need to choose someone who will have the experience, knowledge, time and desire to carry out your wishes and handle your financial affairs.

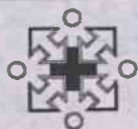
Get started soon

In a real sense, your estate plan sums up the most important chapters in your life - and you'll want this story to have a happy ending. So, start the estate planning process soon.

IT'S ALL ABOUT IMAGE!
This February it gets better.



*making a difference in your life
Right Here.*



Carteret General Hospital
Making a Difference in Your Life

**Carteret General Hospital's Imaging Center
is relocating and expanding this
February to better serve you.**

3500 Arendell Street • Morehead City, NC • 252.808.6000 • www.cegh.org



Hi, my name is Erin Eatman and I am happy to introduce myself as a new Marketing Consultant with Freedom ENC for the Community Newspapers. I am thrilled about this opportunity to both serve you and be a part of this wonderful organization.

I was born in Washington, NC, another beautiful waterfront town. I attended East Carolina University, and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Master's Degree in English.

While pursuing my degrees, I wrote features for ECU's student newspaper, and fell in love with print media. Since then, I have been fortunate to have opportunities to explore writing, editing, and designing brochures, grants, magazines, newsletters, and websites.

I met my husband at East Carolina. We were married this past October. As natives of eastern North Carolina, we love this area and enjoy spending time boating and fishing on the Twin Rivers.

Since I have only lived in New Bern for a year, I am really hoping to learn more about the town and my new neighbors. I am excited about this opportunity and am looking forward to serving all of your advertising needs.



Erin Eatman 633-1153