

Choosing A Guardian



One of the most important things that families need to address, regardless of estate size, is the question of who should take responsibility for raising minor children if Mom and Dad die prematurely. Deciding whom to name as guardian for your young children is critical.

The estate plan of a parent should provide for two contingencies: 1) the surviving parent's death or incapacity to make decisions before the children reach the age of financial maturity, and 2) the simultaneous death or incapacity of both parents. Most people would agree that the two primary concerns for the estate plan in such situations are naming a suitable guardian for the children and administering the estate's assets in a way that will prudently provide for the children.

It is recommended that you select as guardians a couple who share your spiritual values, first of all, and who will raise the children using the same godly principles that have guided you. It's also important that you think through whether it is important to you that they be in the same stage of life as you; couples who have already raised their children (including your own parents) may not welcome the challenge of starting afresh to raise the children you may leave behind.

Another important consideration has to do with the location of the guardians. Ideally, you should choose guardians who live nearby, if possible, so your death does not also mean that the children will be uprooted from their neighborhood, their church, their school friends, etc., and moved to another city or state. The trauma of losing Mom and Dad could be dramatically magnified if a cross-country relocation is required.

Alternate Guardians is also a wise choice, should something hinder your primary guardians from fulfilling their role.

Obviously, the choice of a guardian for your children is a very critical and personal decision, deserving careful consideration. **Choosing a guardian and setting up a children's trust are paramount for a parent's complete estate plan.**