

A photograph of a family of four outdoors. On the left, a woman wears a brown cord jacket and a grey knit beanie. In the center, a man with a beard and a white t-shirt has a young girl with long dark hair sitting on his shoulders; she is wearing a blue vest over an orange long-sleeved shirt. On the right, a woman with long dark hair wears a brown puffer jacket with a plaid lining. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

6 Mistakes Families Make When Choosing An Estate Planning Attorney

Make a wise and loving choice for
your loved ones and your legacy



HI, LASHAWNDA JONES

PERSONAL FAMILY LAWYER

Forgive me for being blunt in this guide I've prepared for you, but I want you to know what I know.

Having worked with families for years, I've discovered that what you really want is to have a caring professional "give it to you straight" when it comes to your legal and financial matters.

So, I'm dispensing with the "legalese" during this short report and I'll give you the simple, unvarnished truth instead.

Sound good? Ok, keep reading!

6 Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing An Estate Planning Attorney

Did you know...

Many families "fly in the dark" when it comes to securing the financial future of their loved ones? Even when they have worked with a lawyer? It's sad, but true.

Far too often I see families settle for a less than satisfying experience with their lawyer because they think that's all that's available...

well, here's the great news, it's not!

You can expect the same great service from your lawyer as you would from Zappos or Nordstrom's when you know what to look for – and that means you can trust that your family will be in great hands after you are no longer there to care for them.

I get it, no one wants to think about a time that we won't be there for our families. Estate planning isn't just for what happens when you die - it plans for your life by:

- Protecting your assets and your children
- Ensuring your rights if you become incapacitated
- **Giving you the peace of mind to live your life to the fullest...**

...knowing you've done everything you can to protect all you've built.

6 Mistakes To Avoid When Choosing An Estate Planning Attorney

As a Personal Family Lawyer®, it breaks my heart when I hear the (countless) stories of families embroiled in legal battles during the most painful times in their lives...

or feeling lost with nowhere to turn after the loss of a loved one, simply because they never found a trusted advisor to help get their affairs in order (**or it wasn't done well or right**).

Here's the great news:

You've already taken the first step towards shedding light on your family's future by downloading this guide.

You're about to discover how you can get real advice and avoid the costly mistakes made by so many when choosing a lawyer for their family's legal planning needs.

Here are the Six Biggest Mistakes I've seen... plus how to make smart choices for your family.



MISTAKE

1

Going It Alone With Online Options or Cheap Lawyers Who Provide Documents Only Service

Did you know that many lawyers like to sarcastically joke to one another about how “good” those online legal programs (LegalZoom®, Pre-Paid Legal®, etc.) are for THEIR business?

Why would that be?

First, because these cheap, online options are NOT as “easy to use” as claimed, and secondly...they actually cost you an arm and a leg because, more than likely you (or your loved ones) will need to hire a real lawyer to clean up the mess later!

You might think online options seem like an inexpensive and safe option, but trust me they will cost your family far more in the long run. And I'm not referring to the money for the service itself – that may be cheap. But, consider this ...

Using those programs can end up leaving thousands (or much more) of YOUR assets in the coffers of Uncle Sam or the County Court system...

...even if you follow all of their instructions to a tee.

I see it ALL THE TIME—frustrated clients bringing in online-generated plans, astonished at all the “hidden savings” my staff and I are able to find for them.

Not to mention all the errors we find by people who think they did everything just right, but still got stuck in unfortunate traps for the unwary that you just wouldn't know about.

The security you get with these plans is actually *false* security.

MISTAKE

It's not my intention to scare you, but again--I've seen it more than I'd like.

Frustrated families coming to see me during a period of great stress, having to attempt to "undo" poorly-crafted plans created by well-intentioned families (or even other lawyers) .

This ends up costing everybody far more than they'd like (not just money - the time wasted and the emotional toll is where the real cost often shows up).

So, I hope you are with me:

YOU AGREE choosing a well-trained and caring professional, who will put YOUR interests first--rather than settling for the false security of legal documents drafted online or with a cheap \$399 alternative (that's really designed to sell you high-commission insurance products) is really in the best interest of your loved ones.

With all that, now we come to the issues you'll deal with in choosing the right estate planning lawyer for your needs.

MISTAKE

2

Choosing a lawyer who will charge you hourly for your planning or lure you in with a \$399 offer

Estate Planning should almost never be provided on an hourly basis. Any lawyer who knows his or her stuff is able to quote you a package fee for a comprehensive service.

What if they don't?

If not, beware because you may be paying for your lawyer to learn how to do things OR you are going to end up with big expenses down the road when things change in your life, the law, or your assets.

And really watch out if the package fee you are quoted is less than a few thousand dollars.

A lawyer offering plans for \$1000 or less is either cutting corners somewhere, luring you in to sell you something expensive, ugly and unseen on the back end, or simply will not be able to provide you with the quality service and care your family deserves.

There are lawyers out there who have based their business model on churning through as many new clients as possible, undercutting their fees, and providing little more than you would get with the do-it-yourself online option.

If you are going to go that route, you might as well go online and do it yourself. But your family deserves better than that.

Simple questions to ask when investigating flat fee services from a lawyer:

- Are all of your fees flat fees?
- What about ongoing assistance after the initial completion of my estate plan documents?
- What happens when I call with legal questions 2 years after my planning documents were completed?
- What if the questions are about something other than my estate plan?
- What about my assets? Will you ensure my assets are owned in the right way?
- Will you keep my plan up to date as my life, the law and my assets change? How does that get paid for?

You need to be satisfied by the answers you receive to these questions, as they often sneak up after-the-fact, and can be a major drain on your family's cash flow and peace of mind.

MISTAKE

3

Not ensuring there is a plan in place for regular communication as your life, the law and your assets change.

There are actually two big problems to consider:

a) What happens when things change?

Your life is going to change. Period. You will want to change your mind about who raises your kids, who takes care of your money, who makes financial and health care decisions for you.

Your kids will grow, they won't necessarily be exactly as you thought. They will marry and have their own children. You will want to change your plan.

You will buy a home, sell a home, start a business, close a business, invest in something new, sell it, enter into a partnership, make a loan to a brother-in-law, etc. Your assets will change.

Will your lawyer make sure your assets are titled properly?

If not, your plan will fail when your family needs it.

You will retire, age, and need help taking care of yourself. Your kids will worry.

Will your lawyer be there to comfort your children and ensure you're cared for the way you want?

That doesn't even account for changes in the law. The tax code changes just about every year. Many of those changes have a direct impact on your family.

Will your lawyer make sure you stay informed about those changes and how they affect you, your family and your plan?

Make sure that your lawyer will keep in touch with you about changes in the law, welcome your calls for changes in your life, and that they keep in regular communication with you otherwise. Most don't.

MISTAKE

3

b) Does the package fee include a regular review of your plan? If not, then you'll be faced with having to initiate reviews yourself, and having to pay additional fees for the privilege, at that.

In fact, the optimum scenario is when a lawyer will provide you with some sort of "estate planning maintenance" program, or membership group for ongoing service--which saves you money and gives you peace of mind over the course of your family's life together.

The ideal type of lawyer is someone who has a "membership program" in place. With a membership program, you pay a small monthly fee, receive ongoing benefits and have periodic reviews of your plan to make sure it's up to date and will work when your family needs it.

MISTAKE

4

Only addressing "obvious" assets, and not having a lawyer work with you to pass on your intangible whole family wealth.

You and I both know that life is about more than just "making money." Think about this ... you have to choose between being infinitely wealthy or infinitely healthy, which do you choose?

Health, of course.

Or this you have to choose between leaving your child a million dollars or the values and insights that are most important to you. Which do you choose?

I think we'd all say the values and insights, right? The money is replaceable, but without the values, the money will be quickly lost.

So why is that most lawyers don't (or won't) address this very obvious truth? If you have worked with a lawyer, you know that the plans most lawyers create focus entirely on passing on financial wealth, when what we all know is most important is the intangible wealth – values, insights, stories and experience.

So why is it that most planning with lawyers doesn't take this into account at all?

Too often, the most valuable family assets are lost at death because the intangible assets are left out of the plan completely.

That's why we focus on passing those on to the next generation as part of the planning we do with your family at no extra charge.

It's just part of our culture and service.

MISTAKE

5

Expecting Poor Service and Receiving It.

Lawyers have a bad reputation: Phone calls not returned for days (or even weeks), surprise invoices for hundreds (or thousands) of dollars, and being generally unaccommodating or intimidating.

You deserve better.

Look for a lawyer who has a team supporting him or her (a solo lawyer without support cannot help but get overwhelmed and not be able to return phone calls) and a process for answering phones and returning phone calls.

Hold out for a lawyer who will never send you a surprise invoice in the mail and never charges for his or her time hourly (or in six-minute increments).

Ask your prospective lawyer whether he or she has a culture of service and what that looks like in his or her office.

If they look at you like you are crazy, leave, fast.

Choosing a lawyer who is not an expert in the kind of service you actually need.

Unfortunately, with the way that most estate planning lawyers present themselves to the world, it seems like we all offer the same services, the same way, and for pretty similar fees.

NOTHING could be further from the truth.

You see, each lawyer does have certain qualifications. Some might be experts at tax law, or in working with corporations or with debt collection, or a whole variety of different things...but are they really providing what you, the head of your family, wants and needs?

What do you want from a lawyer?

When I sit down and talk with regular folks, here's what I discover:

You want to be able to work with a caring professional who knows you and your family... NOT one of those "cattle call" shops, where you're squeezed in with a bunch of other people, and seen by harried, poorly-trained paralegals. Or worse... a "corporate" shop that can't shake the legalese, and can leave you feeling cold by not relating to you as a family with sincere desires.

You want a lawyer who understands the unique needs of YOUR family.

Have young children at home? Look for a lawyer who has experience in serving the needs of families with young children. They really are quite different.

Have elderly parents you are caring for? Look for a lawyer with specific training in serving the needs of the elderly.

Have a child with special needs? Your lawyer needs to have had training in serving the needs of families with special needs.

Don't get your estate plan prepared by a generalist who does not do estate planning every day UNLESS they are co-counseling with a lawyer experienced in planning for families.



**PERSONAL
FAMILY LAWYER**

Here's the bottom line:

You want a lawyer who can confidently help you make good decisions. That's ultimately what it comes down to – you want to feel empowered, informed, and sure about the decisions you are making and it takes a special kind of lawyer to help you in that way.

That's a hallmark of the Personal Family Lawyer® way, and that's how we practice estate planning at LDC Legal.

Your Next Step:

Now that you know the "6 Mistakes" and how to avoid them, your next step is taking action to protect your loved ones, assets, business, and legacy.

As a gift for reading this guide, I'd like to offer you a Life & Legacy Planning Session™, during which you will get more financially organized than you've ever been before and make all the best choices for the people you love.

You can begin by calling our office today at 314-827-4529 to schedule a Life & Legacy Planning Session and mention this guide to find out how to get this \$750 session to schedule a Life & Legacy Planning Session and mention this guide to find out how to get this \$750 session at no charge.