ULLOA FINANCIAL

-Elevate your legacy-

ESSENTIAL ESTATE PLANNING DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

A practical guide to organizing the documents, decisions, and information that help protect you, your family, and your legacy.

How to use this checklist

Use this resource to identify documents you already have, items that may need review, and questions to discuss with an estate planning attorney and other qualified professionals. Not every document is appropriate for every person or household.

HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Name(s):

Date completed:

Next review date:

Attorney or professional contact:

KNOWLEDGE IS THE FIRST STEP. A PLAN IS THE NEXT.

1. CORE ESTATE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

These foundational documents help communicate your wishes, authorize decision-makers, and provide instructions for the management or distribution of your property.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Last will and testament** Names a personal representative, directs the distribution of probate assets, and may nominate guardians for minor children.	
☐	**Revocable living trust, when appropriate** May hold and manage assets during life, provide continuity during incapacity, and direct distributions after death. A trust must be properly funded to work as intended.	
☐	**Pour-over will, if a trust is used** Directs certain probate assets into a revocable trust after death and can address guardianship nominations.	
☐	**Trust funding schedule or asset list** Identifies which assets have been transferred to the trust and which still require attention.	
☐	**Memorandum of tangible personal property** Provides instructions for certain personal items when permitted by state law.	
☐	**Funeral, burial, or memorial instructions** Records preferences and identifies any prepaid arrangements, cemetery property, or designated contacts.	
☐	**Letter of instruction** Offers practical guidance to family or representatives. It does not replace legally valid estate documents.	

Important distinction

A will generally controls probate assets. Beneficiary designations, jointly owned property, transfer-on-death arrangements, and assets held in trust may pass outside the will. Coordination is essential.

2. INCAPACITY AND HEALTHCARE DOCUMENTS

Estate planning also prepares for the possibility that you may be living but unable to manage financial or medical decisions independently.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Durable financial power of attorney** Authorizes a trusted agent to handle specified financial and legal matters. Review the powers granted and any limits.	
☐	**Healthcare surrogate or healthcare power of attorney** Names the person authorized to make healthcare decisions when you cannot do so.	
☐	**Living will or advance directive** States preferences for life-prolonging procedures and end-of-life care under defined circumstances.	
☐	**HIPAA authorization** Permits named individuals to receive protected medical information from healthcare providers.	
☐	**Declaration of preneed guardian, where available** Identifies a preferred guardian if a court-supervised guardianship later becomes necessary.	
☐	**Do-not-resuscitate order or medical order, when appropriate** A clinical order completed with a physician for specific medical circumstances. Requirements vary by state.	
☐	**Long-term care preferences** Records preferences regarding care setting, support network, funding sources, and who should coordinate care.	

PEOPLE TO NAME AND CONFIRM

Primary financial agent:

Alternate financial agent:

Primary healthcare agent:

Alternate healthcare agent:

People authorized under HIPAA:

3. BENEFICIARIES, OWNERSHIP, AND TRANSFER INSTRUCTIONS

These arrangements often determine who receives an asset, regardless of what a will says. Review them together with your estate plan.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Retirement account beneficiary designations** Review primary and contingent beneficiaries for IRAs, employer plans, pensions, and similar accounts.	
☐	**Life insurance and annuity beneficiaries** Confirm names, percentages, contingent beneficiaries, and whether the designation still supports your goals.	
☐	**Payable-on-death bank designations** Review POD instructions on checking, savings, certificates of deposit, and other eligible accounts.	
☐	**Transfer-on-death registrations** Review TOD instructions for brokerage accounts, securities, or vehicles where permitted.	
☐	**Real estate ownership and deeds** Confirm how property is titled and whether survivorship, trust ownership, or another arrangement is intended.	
☐	**Joint ownership arrangements** Understand who owns the asset now, what happens at death, and any tax, creditor, or control implications.	
☐	**Business ownership and succession documents** Coordinate operating agreements, shareholder agreements, buy-sell provisions, and transfer restrictions.	
☐	**Charitable beneficiary instructions** Confirm the organization name, tax identification details, percentage or amount, and any restrictions.	

Review carefully

Beneficiary designations can become outdated after marriage, divorce, death, birth, adoption, a new relationship, or a change in financial goals. Never assume the most recent form on file matches your current wishes.

4. FAMILY, DEPENDENTS, AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Your plan should address the people, responsibilities, and relationships that may require additional protection or customized instructions.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Guardian nominations for minor children** Name preferred guardians and alternates, and discuss the role with them in advance.	
☐	**Financial management for minors** Specify how assets should be managed, by whom, and at what ages or milestones distributions may occur.	
☐	**Planning for a dependent with a disability** Coordinate benefits, care needs, decision-making authority, and any special needs trust with qualified counsel.	
☐	**Blended-family provisions** Clarify how a spouse, children from prior relationships, and other beneficiaries should be protected and treated.	
☐	**Support for an aging parent or other dependent** Document responsibilities, funding expectations, housing plans, and who will coordinate care.	
☐	**Pet care instructions** Name a caregiver, provide practical instructions, and consider whether funds should be set aside.	
☐	**Family loan or gift records** Document outstanding loans, prior gifts, intended equalization, and whether balances should be forgiven or collected.	
☐	**Personal or faith-based wishes** Record meaningful preferences that can guide family, while recognizing that some wishes may not be legally binding.	

FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS TO DISCUSS

People who depend on me:

Potential family conflicts or concerns:

Special instructions to review with counsel:

5. ASSET, LIABILITY, AND DOCUMENT INVENTORY

A clear inventory can help your representatives locate property, understand obligations, and administer your affairs more efficiently.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Real estate records** Deeds, mortgages, property tax records, leases, appraisals, and ownership information.	
☐	**Bank and credit union accounts** Institution names, account types, ownership, beneficiaries, and secure location of statements.	
☐	**Investment and retirement accounts** Brokerage accounts, employer plans, IRAs, pensions, stock plans, and inherited accounts.	
☐	**Insurance policies** Life, disability, long-term care, health, property, casualty, umbrella, and business coverage.	
☐	**Debts and recurring obligations** Mortgages, credit cards, loans, guarantees, subscriptions, and automatic payments.	
☐	**Business and partnership interests** Entity documents, ownership records, valuations, contracts, and succession arrangements.	
☐	**Valuable and sentimental property** Vehicles, jewelry, art, collectibles, firearms where lawful, digital media, and family heirlooms.	
☐	**Tax and professional records** Recent returns, gift tax filings, basis records, accountant details, attorney details, and advisor contacts.	
☐	**Digital assets and online accounts** Email, cloud storage, social media, digital currency, domains, subscriptions, and instructions for access or closure.	

DOCUMENT LOCATION

Original documents stored at:

Copies and secure vault details:

Digital access instructions:

6. FIDUCIARIES AND PROFESSIONAL COORDINATION

The people you appoint should be trustworthy, capable, willing to serve, and aware of their responsibilities.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Personal representative or executor confirmed** Verify the primary and alternate choices and discuss the role with them.	
☐	**Trustee and successor trustee confirmed** Review the trustee's authority, administrative responsibilities, and succession plan.	
☐	**Financial and healthcare agents confirmed** Make sure each person understands the role and knows where documents are stored.	
☐	**Guardian nominations discussed** Confirm willingness, values, location, family circumstances, and potential practical challenges.	
☐	**Professional contact list updated** Include estate planning attorney, tax professional, financial professional, insurance contact, and business counsel.	
☐	**Family communication plan considered** Decide what should be communicated, to whom, and when, while protecting appropriate privacy.	
☐	**Tax and legal coordination completed** Review possible income, estate, gift, property, and business considerations with qualified professionals.	
☐	**Financial plan coordinated with estate plan** Confirm that cash flow, investments, insurance, retirement income, and legacy goals support the legal documents.	

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR ESTATE PLANNING ATTORNEY

Documents and state-specific rules to discuss:

Assets or accounts that may need retitling:

Beneficiary and review questions:

7. REVIEW TRIGGERS AND NEXT STEPS

Estate plans should be reviewed periodically and after significant personal, financial, legal, or family changes.

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**Marriage, divorce, separation, or new partnership** Review fiduciaries, ownership, beneficiaries, and rights under state law.	
☐	**Birth, adoption, death, disability, or changing care needs** Reconsider guardians, trusts, support provisions, and decision-makers.	
☐	**Move to another state or acquisition of property elsewhere** Documents and property laws may differ by jurisdiction.	
☐	**Retirement or major employment change** Review retirement beneficiaries, income needs, insurance, and tax planning.	
☐	**Significant change in assets, debt, business interests, or property** Confirm the plan still reflects the estate and that trusts are properly funded.	
☐	**Change in tax law, family relationships, or charitable goals** Discuss whether documents or strategies need adjustment.	
☐	**Fiduciary becomes unavailable or unsuitable** Name a new primary or alternate and update related documents.	
☐	**Three to five years since the last formal review** Schedule a comprehensive review even when no major event has occurred.	

MY PRIORITIZED ACTION PLAN

	ACTION ITEM	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	TARGET DATE
1			
2			
3			
4			

Bring this completed checklist to your estate planning attorney and other appropriate professionals to identify missing information, coordination issues, and decisions that require further discussion.

EDUCATIONAL DISCLOSURE AND FINAL REVIEW

Before you sign or change any document

Estate planning documents are legal instruments. Their validity, effect, witnessing, notarization, and execution requirements depend on applicable law. Work with a qualified estate planning attorney in the appropriate jurisdiction.

FINAL CONFIRMATION

	DOCUMENT OR ACTION	STATUS / NOTES
☐	**I know where my original documents are stored.**	
☐	**My selected decision-makers know they have been named.**	
☐	**My beneficiary designations have been reviewed against the legal documents.**	
☐	**My trust, if any, has been reviewed for proper funding.**	
☐	**My family or trusted contacts know whom to call.**	
☐	**My next formal review date is scheduled or recorded.**	

NOTES FOR MY NEXT PLANNING CONVERSATION

Important information

This checklist is educational only and is not legal, tax, investment, insurance, or individualized financial advice. Estate planning laws and document requirements vary by state and circumstances. Consult qualified legal, tax, and financial professionals before preparing, signing, funding, amending, or relying on estate planning documents. Ulloa Financial does not replace the role of an attorney.