



YOUR WEALTH JOURNEY — NAVIGATING LIFE'S FINANCIAL MILESTONES

Helping Aging Parents Get the Support They Need

As your parents or other relatives get older, they may need help with everything from managing their daily care to performing tasks such as grocery shopping, paying bills, and getting to appointments. In addition to these everyday activities, they will often need help making significant decisions about their finances and living arrangements.

Making these decisions and providing ongoing support can be stressful for you, your parents, and other family members. Here are five steps for helping your aging relatives and other loved ones get the support they need and for navigating what can be a challenging—yet also rewarding—time of life.

Discuss Current and Future Care Needs

Understand Available Resources

Consider Setting Up Power of Attorney

Update Important Documents

Determine How Finances Will Be Managed

Start the Conversations and Planning Before They Are Needed



Discuss Current and Future Care Needs

There's often a progression: Early on, your parents may need light support, such as a housecleaning service or a caregiver (family or otherwise) who comes occasionally to help with basic care and needs. At some point, those needs will likely be more complicated, and a decision must be made about future care and a possible move, whether into a family member's home or a long-term-care facility.

It's a good idea to discuss care needs and wishes with your parents sooner rather than later, so everyone can plan for this progression. If you have siblings, you'll want to bring them into these conversations early on so you can coordinate and make decisions and arrangements together. Topics to discuss include:

- Where do your parents envision living as they get older and no longer can fully care for themselves? Do they plan to move into a senior apartment or assisted-living facility, or do they prefer to have in-home care?
- Who will provide them with the different types of support they need? Can family members provide it, or does it make sense to hire a caregiver?
- What financial resources are available to help cover the costs of future care?
- Where can important documents, such as insurance policies, financial account statements, a will, and healthcare directives, be found?

Keep in mind that as you're exploring current or future care needs, most communities offer free eldercare resources to help aging people and their family members get information about services available to them. The U.S. Administration on Aging offers a database for finding these resources locally at eldercare.acl.gov.



Understand Available Resources

As you discuss and evaluate your parents' care needs, you'll want to have a complete picture of the financial resources available to pay for them. This may include Social Security payments, retirement savings, former employer pension payments, Medicare plan benefits, and long-term-care or life insurance policies.

It's important to understand your parents' financial situation so you can help them find care options they can afford and maximize the resources they have.

Because financial conversations can be sensitive, consider meeting with your lawyer or William Blair wealth advisor who can help guide the discussion and provide expertise.



Consider Setting Up Power of Attorney

At some point, aging parents may become incapable of making financial, legal, and medical decisions on their own. Before that happens, they should appoint a highly trusted individual (whether an adult family member or a professional advisor) to serve as their durable power of attorney.

A power of attorney can become effective immediately (even while individuals still have full capacity) or it may be effective only if they become incapacitated.

The designated agent can sign legal and medical documents and make financial decisions on their behalf, conducting any financial transaction that they could have conducted themselves.

A lawyer can help set up power of attorney in a way that best fits your parents' needs.



Update Important Documents

As you review your parents' resources, also ensure that their important documents and accounts are up to date, reflecting their current address and contact information, beneficiaries, and goals. For example, a will that hasn't been updated for years may include beneficiaries who are deceased or estate distribution instructions that do not reflect their current wishes. Likewise, beneficiary designations on retirement plans or insurance policies may also be outdated.

Documents and accounts to review include:

- Wills and any trusts that have been established
- Healthcare directives
- Power of attorney
- Property titles
- Insurance and long-term-care policies
- Financial accounts, including bank and investment accounts

As you review these documents, aim to keep them organized and in one place so they are easy to find when you need them. Sometimes a trusted family member or advisor will store a copy for safekeeping, and there are now apps that make sharing and storing such documents electronically more convenient and secure.



Determine How Finances Will Be Managed

Beyond designating a power of attorney, it's worth deciding how financial decisions and transactions will be managed when your parents can no longer manage them for themselves.

This can include making sure bills and taxes are paid on time, making investment decisions on their behalf, and providing financial gifts to either family members or charitable organizations. Many banks offer “convenience accounts” that let the account holder authorize another person, such as an adult child, to write checks, pay bills, and make withdrawals on their behalf.

Even before your parents are ready to give up making their own financial decisions, it may be a good idea for someone to monitor their account transactions to reduce the risk of errors or theft. Some banks will set up “view only” access to their accounts.



Start the Conversations and Planning Before They Are Needed

Because there are so many facets to supporting aging parents—from helping them get care to ensuring their finances are well-managed—it makes sense to turn to trusted advisors to help you along the way. The sooner you have these conversations, the more prepared your entire family will be when the time comes.

Contact Us:

Please reach out to your William Blair wealth advisor or contact us at pwm@williamblair.com.

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