

# Planning With Parents in Mind



**Special  
Olympics**



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# Planning with Parents in Mind

Without adequate planning, unraveling the finances and managing the affairs of parents who can no longer do this for themselves can become a full time — and frustrating — task. This situation is becoming more common as people live longer lives and at greater distances from their grown children, many of whom have no idea about the details their parents have handled for decades. Here are some tips to smooth the way.



## START A DIALOG WITH YOUR PARENTS

Before you do anything, make sure you have permission from your parents to step in, provided of course that they have the capacity to give permission. If your parents do not have the capacity to give permission, consult an elder care attorney who can guide you through the necessary steps for taking over management of your parents' affairs.

## FIGURE OUT THEIR FINANCES

Get ready to go back in time. When you are invited into a parent's financial life, you are likely going to leave the online world and enter the world of cardboard boxes and musty paper. Those of us who are used to getting information with a few clicks can be jarred by the detective work of going through boxes and filing cabinets dating back 50 years to get information about a single account.

Track down assets such as checking, savings, brokerage and retirement accounts, certificates of deposit and stock. Create a file for each account and a master list of all accounts, account numbers and balances. Check their mail each day for six to eight weeks to collect statements and bills that can help you draw up a complete list of expenses. Pay close attention to itemized credit card bills and automatic withdrawals. Some accounts may renew automatically for a service your parents no longer need.



## SECURE POWER OF ATTORNEY

This is an absolute necessity when you are stepping in to help manage someone else's financial affairs; you can't do anything without it. You will be asked to provide that power of attorney (POA) at every turn. A notarized financial POA form gives you the legal right to conduct financial transactions for someone else.

If your parents executed a POA many years ago, determine whether it should be updated. It has become common for POAs to be customized for a specific institution or state. Or your parents may have accounts at institutions that require customized versions, necessitating multiple POAs. For these and other reasons, be sure to locate a convenient notary, as you will likely need to have documents notarized repeatedly. Many banks provide free notary services for their customers.



In addition to the financial POA, make sure you have an up-to-date health care power of attorney from your parents. A health care POA gives you the authority to talk to your parents' medical providers and make health care decisions on their behalf. It's ideal to talk with your parents about these issues when they are still able to make plans, and before a medical emergency strikes. Emphasize to them how important this is to ensure that their wishes are known and respected.

Discuss what kind of medical treatment they do and do not want if incapacitated, and ask them to put their instructions in writing. This “living will” communicates a person’s wishes if a serious injury or illness prevents them from speaking for themselves. The POA document and living will are often combined as an “advance health care directive,” which takes effect if and when your parents are not able to speak for themselves. This may never come to pass; and unless it does, their doctors will talk with them directly about their treatment choices, even if they have named an agent.

An estate planning attorney can provide you with the appropriate forms. Consult your elder care attorney if your parents don’t have POA forms and lack the capacity to complete them.

## FIND THE WILL

People typically do not update their wills or revocable living trusts frequently or at all. It may have been decades since your parents last considered their estate plan. Also, many assets do not transfer through a will or revocable living trust; rather, they transfer through the beneficiary designation forms people complete when they open their accounts. In your parents’ case, that may have been decades ago, so it’s important to make sure these documents accurately reflect their current wishes. If there is no will, or if your parents don’t know where a previously created will is but are still capable of making the decisions necessary to create a new one, consult an estate planning attorney to draw up a will. Consult your elder care attorney if your parents lack the capacity to create a will.

## HAVE A TEAM

Sometimes it’s worth it to get outside help. Setting up a parent’s medical or rehab appointments, dealing with the latest phone call about a parent who has fallen, and sorting through unfamiliar Medicare forms can be overwhelming when you are also trying to meet the demands of your own family’s life. Here are some ways to ease the pressure:



- Hiring a social worker with expertise in dealing with the elderly, known as a geriatric consultant, can save time and effort. These people know the going rate for personal care assistants and the best equipment to help people with physical limitations, like walkers and shower equipment.
- Hire a financial advisor or get in touch with the one your parents already work with. This will help you keep up with IRA rollover deadlines and notices about required minimum withdrawals from retirement accounts. The advisor can also help you prioritize investment liquidation in a tax-savvy way if this is required to cover extraordinary expenses.
- Retain a tax preparer or accountant to file your parents’ taxes.
- Enlist the support of family and friends. Even if they cannot be physically present, you will find their emotional support invaluable.

## ASSESS THE EXTENT OF ONLINE ACCOUNTS

Your parents may live blissfully offline, but if they have any online presence at all, you will need user names and passwords for every account to begin the process of closing them, as necessary. Without account login information, settling an estate involves delays and difficulties.



## PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

It's amazing how many little things crop up as a result of one seemingly minor change. If your parents can no longer drive, you may have to sell or donate their car, cancel insurance, return E-ZPass transponders and close these and other accounts (e.g., Sirius radio, OnStar emergency assistance, etc.). Your role may expand to include other duties such as caregiving, decluttering and/or downsizing, moving your parents into a care facility and making arrangements for pets, just to name a few.

## TAKE IN THE BIG PICTURE

Once you've gotten your parents' affairs organized, take a moment to breathe and reflect on the incredible gift you have given them. Now spend some quality time with them and take current financial or health matters off the table. Instead, ask them to share their life stories and memories. Often, parents who are struggling to handle the simple tasks of daily living can recall with considerable clarity their early lives.

## CONSIDER YOUR OWN WISHES

As you complete the process of organizing your parents' lives, do the same for yourself. And, as you create or update your will or trust, consider joining the many people who have decided to leave a gift to charity because they care about causes that are important in their lives. When you do, we hope you will consider leaving a gift for Special Olympics to foster the acceptance and inclusion of all people for years to come. It's easy and offers many benefits:

- You can leave a gift to Special Olympics and take care of loved ones, including a family member with special needs. Making Special Olympics a contingent beneficiary puts us next in line to receive the funds after your family.
- You are not locked in to a decision you make today — you can change your beneficiaries at any time.
- You can designate Special Olympics to receive a percentage of an account's value, leaving the remainder to your heirs.
- There is no immediate cost to you. Special Olympics receives this gift after your estate is settled.
- There is often no need to go to the trouble or expense of consulting a lawyer to create or update your will; leaving a gift can be a simple matter of filling out or changing a beneficiary designation form.
- You can designate your gift for the Special Olympics program of your choice.
- There is no minimum donation.

## Your Gift, Your Way

We welcome unrestricted gifts, as well as those designated for a specific initiative. Leaving your gift unrestricted enables Special Olympics to address the greatest needs at the time your gift is received. To designate your gift for a particular program, please discuss your objectives with a member of our staff. We would also like to work with you to create a statement of intent to ensure that your wishes for your estate gift are honored as you intended.

If you have already left a gift for Special Olympics, we hope you will let us know. We would like to thank you and welcome you to The Champions Society®, our way of recognizing the exceptional individuals who have made Special Olympics a part of their lasting legacy.

### To make a gift in your will for Special Olympics, we recommend using the following language:

I hereby give, devise and bequeath \_\_\_\_\_ (dollar amount or percentage) to Special Olympics, a nonprofit organization located at 2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037, Federal Tax ID #52-0889518, for Special Olympics' general use and purpose.

### Or, to benefit a local Special Olympics chapter affiliate:

I hereby give, devise and bequeath \_\_\_\_\_ (dollar amount or percentage) to Special Olympics (insert local chapter affiliate name here along with their city, state), for its general use and purpose.



## We're Here to Help

Special Olympics' gift-planning staff is available to help you explore how to make room in your planning for a legacy gift to Special Olympics. If you have already left a gift to Special Olympics in your will, trust or by beneficiary designation, we hope you will let us know so that we may properly thank you, ensure that your wishes are carried out, and welcome you as a member of our legacy society, The Champion's Society®.

**Access our complimentary planning library at  
[solegacygiving.org/plan](https://solegacygiving.org/plan)**



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