

7 COSTLY MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN CHOOSING AN ESTATE ATTORNEY

MISTAKE #1: Choosing an attorney who does not concentrate his or her law practice in the areas of trusts and estates. The law has become very complex. The days of the “general practitioner” are over. Choose an attorney who focuses his or her law practice on estate planning and estate administration.

MISTAKE #2: Choosing an attorney who will not guarantee a flat-rate fee. Don’t fall into the trap of choosing a lawyer who charges you by the hour for estate planning services. Choose an attorney who will charge you a guaranteed flat-rate fee.

MISTAKE #3: Choosing an attorney whose fees are very low compared to “market rates.” You should be concerned about the quality of a attorney’s work when the fee is discounted. Choose an attorney who charges you at least a “5” on a fee scale ranging between 1 – 10. Estate planning is serious, and it is not an appropriate time to shop for the lowest price.

MISTAKE #4: Choosing an attorney who is in downtown Chicago and not easily accessible. You will likely meet with your estate planning attorney 3 times: (1) initial consultation, (2) review of the first drafts, and (3) signing ceremony. Choose an attorney who is relatively close to your home or office and who can offer hassle free parking.

MISTAKE #5: Choosing an attorney who does not make himself or herself accessible for evening and weekend appointments. Attorneys know how difficult it can be for you to take time off of work for attorney-client meetings. Choose an attorney who is willing to work around your schedule.

MISTAKE #6: Choosing an attorney who does not have a significant amount of experience in helping families after a loved-one dies. Post-death administration experience helps a great deal when it comes to drafting effective documents that are established before death. Choose an attorney who has guided clients through the maze of probate and the intricacies of trust administration.

MISTAKE #7: Choosing an attorney who provides a “one-size fits all” estate plan. Choose an attorney who will create a customized estate plan that is appropriate for your particular circumstances.