

8 Things Advisors Should Avoid When Recommending an Estate Planning Attorney

AVOID #8: Recommending 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. Recommend an attorney who focuses his or her law practice on estate planning and estate administration.

AVOID #7: Recommending an attorney who will not guarantee a flat-rate fee. Don’t fall into the trap of recommending a lawyer who charges by the hour for estate planning services. Recommend an attorney who will charge a guaranteed flat-rate.

AVOID #6: Recommending an attorney whose fees are low compared to “market rates.” You should be concerned about the quality of a lawyer’s work when the fee is discounted. Recommend an attorney who charges 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.

AVOID #5: Recommending an attorney who is not conveniently located. Clients will likely meet with an estate planning attorney 3 times: (1) initial consultation, (2) review of the first drafts, and (3) signing ceremony. Recommend an attorney who is easily accessible.

AVOID #4: Recommending an attorney who does not make himself or herself available for evening and weekend appointments. Attorneys know how difficult it can be for clients to take time off of work for attorney-client meetings. Recommend an attorney who is willing to work around the client’s schedule.

AVOID #3: Recommending 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. Recommend an attorney who has guided clients through the maze of probate and the difficulties of trust administration.

AVOID #2: Recommending an attorney who provides a ridiculously thick, boilerplate, “one-size fits all” trust-based estate plan. Recommend an attorney who will create a customized estate plan that is appropriate for your client’s particular circumstances.

AVOID #1: Recommending an attorney who does not seek to strengthen the relationship that you have with your client