

Blueprints

Planning For Special Needs Families

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Independent, Individualized Investment Advice and Financial Planning

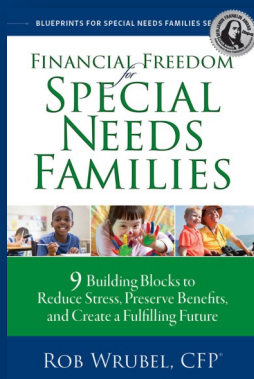
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Rob's new book,
*Financial Freedom for
Special Needs Families*
is available on
Amazon

Best Intentions Can Ruin Your Plans — Communicate To Preserve Benefits

TV shows and movies look to enhance drama in every scene and a favorite device to create tense emotions when someone dies is the reading of the will. These scenes have the characters sitting on the edges of their seats and we know they are wondering if they will get millions or be cut out of the will altogether. These scenes end with one person in tears and the rest hugging each other with relief.

There's no reason for a situation like this to play out for your family, and if you've done your planning with a special-needs trust, you want to communicate your planning to your family well before the time anyone leaves this earth. You do not want a situation where the personal representative of someone else's estate calls to let you know your son or daughter with a developmental disability will inherit money from an uncle. This will put tears in the eyes of everyone involved as your loved one loses the programs that provide access to health care, community support and income.

Clients of mine have let me know that an aunt, uncle, grandmother or grandfather intended to leave money to their family member. For one family, an aunt changed the beneficiary designation of a life insurance policy to leave money to the relative with a developmental disability. Sometimes, we work with families where there is a share from a grandparent's will intended to go directly to the person with a disability.

These estate gifts are from

caring, well-intended people trying to do something good. Unfortunately, if these gifts are left the wrong way, they can lead to disqualification and a loss of benefits. A person qualified by the Social Security Administration to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) cannot have resources of more than \$2,000 and maintain eligibility.

You think you've done your job, met with your planning team and put a special-needs trust in place. Until you've let the rest of your family know what you've done, the job is incomplete. The next step is to pick up the phone, send an email or sit down with anyone you think might want to leave money to your son, daughter or family member.

This seems like a natural step — so many aspects of our lives are different as a result of a family member with special needs. We have met new people, have often had significant medical and therapeutic experiences and had to learn to advocate through school and government systems. Throughout it all, it has helped to learn from others, ask others for their insights and share our experiences. We talk to everyone about these issues. Why do we hesitate when it comes to talking about legal planning with our families?

Just sitting down with certain family members brings up emotions and past experiences which may not be the most fulfilling or stable, for some people. In these cases, it might be better to have a spouse or friend help with communication.

Blueprints: Planning For Special Needs Families Workshops

The **Blueprints** planning process was designed to help families with a member with special needs.

Workshops are free, but registration is required. More information at 719-632-0818 or online at ciginc.net.

Rob Wrubel is available for individual appointments.

Call 719-632-0818 to get started today.

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Whenever we talk to others about their estate plans, there's one underlying aspect of the conversation that can cause discomfort. For the estate plan to go into effect, someone has to die, and we don't want to talk with parents or grandparents about their demise. This also brings up a wide-range of emotions – from fear of asking for help to embarrassment in talking about death.

For others, there is the complicated issue of asking for help without appearing to ask for money. Most of the time, we do not know what plans have been put in place by other people and the choices made by others can include *not* giving to you or your family member with special needs. You are trying to communicate your plans without asking for a handout but you do want to help point them in the right direction if needed.

Communicating your plan is an important conversation and one you have to have for your planning to succeed. To start, write down a simple script and then practice your lines. My experience shows that once someone has explained the

purpose of the special-needs trust and how important it can be in creating a high quality of life by preserving benefits and providing additional funds then the conversation is rewarding and goes well.

Your script should focus on what you have done and why, without requests for others to do anything. If they listen and understand then they will ask what they can do, hopefully. Depending on how they've structured their estate plans, it might mean they do not have to do anything. For others, it might mean they have to visit their financial professionals and attorneys for advice on the best way to update wills or trusts, change beneficiary designations or alter their gifts plans.

The goal of your estate plan is to preserve benefits and pass along a legacy to each family member as you choose. For your family member with special needs, this means letting other caring friends and family members understand the importance of benefits and the strategies you have taken to preserve them.



Managing wealth. Building relationships.

more information at
www.CIGinc.net

Rob Wrubel, CFP[®], AIF[®], AEP[®], is a Senior Vice President with Cascade Investment Group, member FINRA & SIPC. Rob is also a father of a daughter with Down syndrome. Cascade Investment Group is not a tax or legal advisor. You should always consult with your tax advisor or attorney before taking any actions that may have tax consequences. Call Rob at 719-632-0818 to schedule an appointment.