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Letter of Intent Guidelines

Even if you have an estate plan and especially if you do not have an estate plan it is important for all parents of disabled or children with special needs and even parents of typical children to have a letter of intent.

It is the most important document that you can prepare in the estate planning process because it will help the people that will be caring for your children interpret your hopes and desires for your child. This is not a document that is prepared by an attorney nor is it a formal legal document. However, it will be heavily relied on by the person(s) caring for your child. By compiling as much information about your child and his needs and your desires you will be giving future care providers the knowledge and insight they will need to provide the best possible care- they will not have to waste precious time learning how to manage and care for your child.

This is not an easy letter to write it is very emotional and difficult. However, all parents must go through this very difficult step to ensure a well planned future for their special needs child. Once you write the letter, sign and date it. Each year, you take it out and add it to it (or revise it if it is on the computer) and sign and date the changes.

The letter can be addressed to anyone you wish-for example "To Whom it May Concern", "To My Guardian(s), Trustee(s) and Executor". The letter should address the following points (at least):

1. Family History

Where and when you were born, raised, married, something special about siblings, grandparents, and other relatives, special friends, description of your child's birth, when, where, your feelings, etc.

2. General Overview

A brief overview of your child's life to date and your general feelings about the future.

3. Education

Summary of educational experiences and desires for future education; regular classes, special classes, special schools, related services, mainstreaming, extra curricular activities and recreation; types of educational emphasis, i.e., vocational, academic, total communication, etc.; name of specific programs, school, teachers, related service providers.

4. Employment

Types of work your child may enjoy; open employment with supervision, sheltered workshop, activity center, etc.; companies that you are aware of that may be of interest to your child and provide employment in the community.

5. Residential Environment

To live with relatives or friends or other-specify; if not these people or these people pass away, your other options, i.e., group home or institution in same community-specify size, describe the best living arrangement-single room, etc.

6. Social Environment

Mention type of social activities your child enjoys, i.e. sports, dances, movies, etc.; should they have spending money and how they should spend it; favorite foods and eating habits; does your child take and/or enjoy vacations.

7. Religious Environment

Specify religion; local place of worship your family attends; local clergy that may be familiar with your family; has there been religious education and is this an interest to your child.

8. Medical Care

Current doctors, therapists, clinics, hospitals, etc. and how frequently your child attends and for what purpose; current medications, how given, for what purpose; describe medications that have not worked in the past; medical equipment, including child's current daily medical care routine.

9. Behavior Management

Describe current behavior management program that is being used; other behavior management programs that have not worked.

10. Final Arrangements

Desires for your child's funeral arrangements- including- prearrangements you have made (if any), choice of funeral home, cremation or burial, cemetery, monument, religious service and clergy.

11. Other Information

Include any other information you feel will help the person caring for your child provide the best possible care.

This letter should be placed with all of your other relevant legal and personal documents concerning your child. Do not forget to sign and date the letter.