



Things to Think About!

Check it Out

By Karen Morgan

If you live in Utah, the following are some addresses and contact information you just shouldn't be without. Hope it's helpful.

Disability Law Center
455 East 400 South #410
SLC, UT 84111
Phone: (801) 363-1347
1-800-662-9080

Services for People with
Disabilities (DSPD)
120 N 200 W. #411
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103
Phone: 801.538.4200 fax
801.538.4279 tty 801.538.4192

Additional information on the topic of estate planning for the disabled can be viewed at...

<http://www.autism-pdd.net/estate.html>

If you have any contact info for similar services available in your home state we'd love to add them to our web listings. Anything you would like to see added can be sent via the email address listed below.

Also, if you have a topic you would like to see covered in our newsletter, or have a specific question that we can answer directly, please feel free to contact us anytime through the following email address...

snrproject@hotmail.com

To see more of what we have to offer, please visit our website at www.snrproject.com.

Financial Planning and the Special Needs Family

By Linda Jorgensen

Every day millions of parents struggle with the day-to-day responsibilities of raising children with special needs. Often their biggest challenge is the most neglected one. That is, putting financial strategies in place to ensure the kids are taken care of as they grow. Most families don't consider this a necessary part of their family financial planning until the children become older. However, parents need to begin planning for future financial care as soon as their children are born regardless of ability or disability.



The Challenge

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that more than one in 10 Americans between the ages of 16 and 64 suffers from some physical, mental or emotional impairment. Finding the right services, and arranging future financial support for them, can be tricky.



Acquiring, and then maintaining government benefits can be a delicate balancing act. Parents are often intimidated by the possibility of making the wrong decision. Afraid of jeopardizing their disabled child's government benefits, many find themselves backed into a "don't rock the boat" and "stick with the status-quo" situation or mentality and consequently do nothing in planning for the future. The best solution to this problem is educating yourself about your family needs and the options available to you.

Most disabled qualify for some government-sponsored care or training programs. They can also obtain financial help through the Supplemental Security Income program (SSI)

(Federal SSI information Number 1-800-772-1213) This program provides a monthly allowance and generally ensures that the disabled person is eligible for important Medicaid health benefits. Often the Medicaid program is the sole source of insurance for many disabled.

But, well-meaning parents or relatives can cut off this assistance if they gift a few thousand dollars to a disabled child, unwittingly making them ineligible for SSI and health care because their assets surpass the \$2,000.00 limit set by the government.

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Financial Planning continued...

Dealing with the legal and financial complexities of estate planning, life insurance, trusts, and taxes can be overwhelming for parents. Most are more worried about their children's care than they are about themselves making an overall assessment of the family situation



imperative. This will enable parents to take care of their children, even after they are gone. It is often said that parents wish their children a long and happy life- and wish they could live one day longer but that doesn't generally happen.

We challenge you to take some time to consider the possibilities of the future. Make a list of what your concerns are and then start asking questions. By determining what options are available to you, you can begin to formulate a plan for dealing with any situations that could arise.

To get you started, the following are things that should be put into action without hesitation or delay.

Step 1: Family Budget

Develop a financial strategy by evaluating specific family needs, and the resources of the family to meet those needs. Setting in place a precise family budget will help in managing your resources and allow you to



quickly assess where room can be made for emergencies and any future needs that may arise.

Step 2: Part A - Estate Planning

This part is a bit more complex. In the beginning it is recommended that parents make their wills or re-evaluate existing wills all ready in place. It is important to specifically cover both

a) guardianship determination, and b) a Special Needs Trust (this will transfer insurance and savings, and arrange general care for their children after their deaths). Evaluating this plan on a yearly basis will keep the information current and appropriate



to the individual family situation and circumstances. Ensuring these arrangements are made can give parents peace of mind.



Step 2: Part B - Special Needs Trust

One of the best things a family can do is establish a Special Needs Trust (*also known as a Supplemental Needs Trusts*). These trusts allow parents to leave assets for the disabled child - for housing, transportation, recreation, vacations, a personal-care assistant, etc.- without disrupting the government benefits and programs the child may need to survive.

At the same time, families need to consider the financial demands of their nondisabled children, putting college savings and insurance coverage in place for them as well.

A growing number of insurance and brokerage houses have set up customer service teams focused on financial planning for families of special needs children including help in setting up wills and trusts that don't threaten a child's benefits. It is also suggested that talking with an attorney familiar with both the laws in your state plus state and federal guidelines governing government benefits for special needs children would be helpful.

Remember: "An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure". Making preparations now will bring focus, direction, and peace of mind for the future. ~