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The four documents everyone should have.

1. Will

- A will is a document that sets forth how a person's probate property will be distributed upon death.
- Any person who is at least 18 years old and of sound mind may make a will in Ohio .
- With limited exceptions, a will must be written and signed.
- If you do *not* make a will, you do not have any say about how your probate property will be distributed.

2. Financial powers of attorney

- A legal document that many people use to help handle their financial affairs; created to allow one person, called the *principal*, to authorize another person, called the *attorney-in-fact* or the *agent*, to act or make decisions for the principal.
- Because such documents give significant and far-reaching powers to another, financial powers of attorney should be made only after thoughtful and careful consideration.

3. Living will

- A legal document you can use to express your wishes about the use of life-sustaining treatment if you should become terminally ill or permanently unconscious.
- Also, a living will permits you to state your intent to make - or not to make - an anatomical gift (such as organs or tissues) upon your death.
- A living will only applies to end-of-life circumstances

4. Health care power of attorney

- A legal document that authorizes another person to make health care decisions for you if you cannot make them for yourself.
- A health care power of attorney covers all other situations concerning your medical care whenever you cannot make health care decisions for yourself.

Probate alternatives, useful when appropriate for your circumstances.

- Joint and survivor.
- Transferable on death (TOD).
- Payable on death (POD).
- Trust

Remember that property with a beneficiary, life insurance, annuities, 401K, IRA, are not probate property. Such are paid to joint owner, TOD or POD beneficiary or beneficiaries or the beneficiary or beneficiaries designated by you for the IRA, 401K, life insurance or annuity. Such ownership or designation must be reviewed regularly and should be discussed with a professional knowledgeable in estate planning. In many circumstances. You need to understand the good and bad of such and the legal effect.

Probate avoidance is not necessarily is problem avoidance. Educate yourself and seek professional advice.

Great resources: Ohio State Bar Association www.ohioabar.org/
LawFacts pamphlets www.ohioabar.org/pub/lawfacts/