

MEIER LAW FIRM

Business and Estate Planning

Plan Now. Plan Right.

Deciding on Permanent Guardians

As an estate planning attorney, and the parent of four young kids, I know how difficult it is to decide on who should raise your kids if something happened to you. In all my sessions of counseling parents on this difficult decision, I have never once heard anyone say that they have the perfect person in mind. The reality is we are special! There really is no one like us. But, that being said, we still have to choose someone to be a guardian for our kids just in case. If we don't, a judge will do it for us, and that is definitely a nightmare situation every parent should avoid.

The good news is that I am here to guide you through this difficult process, and help you come to the best decision on guardianship for your children, assuming you don't already know. And even if you do know who your first choice for a guardian is, you will need to name a back-up, and a third choice as well, just in case someone declines or is unable to serve.

To prepare for making this decision, I have a short exercise for you to do before our next session. If you are married, you and your spouse can do this separately or together. If you and your spouse disagree over guardians, don't worry, you're normal! In that case, I recommend you do this short exercise separately, and both of you bring your results with you to our session. I promise you that you will come to an agreement and make the best decision for your family once you have all of the information and guidance you need.

Pre-Session Exercise

STEP ONE

Take out a blank piece of paper and write down all of the potential people who love your children and could potentially serve as guardians. Ideally, you will write down at least 5-7 names of people who can serve. If you have a couple in mind (i.e. your brother and his wife), then write both of their names together on the list. We'll talk about the best way to name couples when we meet. For now, just write down all the names.

STEP TWO

Put away your list of potential people, and take out a separate blank piece of paper and write down a list of your top 3 priorities when it comes to raising your children (i.e. age of guardian, religion, lifestyle, location of guardian, integrity, and many more factors you need to consider.)

STEP THREE

Compare both sheets of paper. Rank in order the "potential people" you listed from first choice down to last choice, based on who offers/possesses most, if not all, of your top three priorities.

Bring your results from this short exercise with you to our session. I also have some additional techniques to help you come to the best decision for guardians for your family. If you need to discuss this beforehand, always feel free to call me at 949.718.0420 or email me.