

MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Financial Planners Put Your Goals Within Reach

(NAPSA)—If you're contemplating retirement, buying a home, a child's education or eliminating debt to get on the path to saving, you may find that a competent and ethical financial planner can help you reach those goals. The financial planning process involves gathering relevant financial information, examining your current financial status, setting life goals and developing an appropriate strategy.

Choosing a financial planner is a critical decision, so take the time and care to select a trustworthy financial planner, one on whom you can depend for professional advice and services. One of the most trusted credentials for financial advisers is CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, or CFP® certification, which is granted by the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. (CFP Board) to individuals who meet its rigorous standards of education, examination, experience and ethics.

"A financial plan allows you to take charge of your choices and achieve a sense of financial well-being," says David G. Strege, CFP®, and chair of CFP Board's Board of Directors. "It allows you to understand how each financial decision affects other areas of your finances."

How to Choose a Planner

Interview and evaluate several financial planners to find a com-

Financial planners can play a central role in helping you meet your life goals and achieve financial well-being. ®

petent, qualified professional with whom you feel comfortable and whose style suits your needs.

Questions to Ask

1. What is your experience? Ask about the planner's work experience and current practice.

2. What are your qualifications? Ask what credentials and licenses the planner has earned. A CFP® mark is widely viewed as the premier financial planning designation. Look for experience in insurance, tax planning, investments, estate planning or retirement planning.

3. What services do you offer? Generally, financial planners cannot sell insurance or products such as mutual funds or stocks without the proper licenses or give investment advice unless registered with state or federal authorities.

4. What's your approach to financial planning? Some planners develop a plan that brings together all of your financial goals. Others provide advice on specific areas.

5. Will you be the only person working with me? The planner may have attorneys, insurance agents or tax specialists assist in

developing your plan. In that case, get their names and check their backgrounds.

6. How will I pay for your services? The financial planner should put this in writing. Planners can be salaried by their company, receive fees based on an hourly or flat rate, a percentage of your assets or may earn commissions from products they sell.

7. How much do you charge? While the amount will depend on your needs, the financial planner should be able to estimate all possible costs.

8. Will your recommendations be influenced by other considerations?

Ask about any possible conflicts of interest.

9. Have you ever been publicly disciplined for any unlawful or unethical actions in your professional career? Government and self-regulatory organizations, state insurance and securities departments and CFP Board keep records on the disciplinary history of financial planners and advisers.

10. Can I have it in writing? Get a written agreement detailing the services provided.

Learn More

You can find more information about CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professionals at www.CFP.net or (800) 487-1497.