

Your Family Finances

Preserving The Family Nest Egg

(NAPSA)—When it comes to protecting family and finances, a little planning goes a long way.

That's the advice from analysts who say that taking simple steps, such as drafting or updating a will, can not only help keep your assets in the family but could also help decide how—and with whom—your children grow up, should something happen to you.

Still, a Harris Interactive survey found that over half of all adult Americans do not have a will—a percent that has remained virtually unchanged over recent years. Additionally, many people who have wills may not alter them to reflect major life changes, possibly leaving them at risk.

So how can you be more certain that your estate is protected? Experts at ARAG, a global leader of legal insurance, offer these tips:

Stay Covered

If you don't have a will, draft one. If you do have a will, keep it up to date. Events such as a marriage, divorce or the birth of a child are probably the most common life changes that families face, and you should adjust a will accordingly. You'll also want to change your will if one of the beneficiaries that you named dies, or if you want to reallocate your assets or add or remove a beneficiary. Also, it's wise to change your will if you sell property or assets that were previously included or if you acquire a substantial new asset, such as a house.

Make It Legal

A number of conditions must be satisfied for a will to be legal. For instance, you must be of sound mind, meaning that the will is not valid if you were mentally incom-



Creating and updating a will could help safeguard family assets.

petent or under duress when it was created. Also, you must create the document of your own free will. Some states require at least two (sometimes three) witnesses to the signing of your will. Finally, a will should be either completely handwritten, completely computer generated or completely typed. Consistency is key.

Make A Plan

In addition to a will, you may want to consider making provisions for lifetime gifts. In some circumstances, this may help reduce taxes and time or expenses related to probate. You should also consider establishing power of attorney to assign financial and/or health care decision making to another. You might also look into "legal plans." The plans work much like insurance benefits: Individuals enroll directly or through their employer or other association. Members receive access to a group of attorneys and other legal resources to assist with their various legal needs for an affordable premium.

For more information and tips, visit www.araggroup.com.