

# FIVE STEPS

## TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY'S FUTURE



ALEXANDER RIGGENBACH  
CORNERSTONE FINANCIAL



**CORNERSTONE**  
FINANCIAL  
COACH

**A Simple Guide to Financial Security and Peace  
of Mind for Every Stage of Life**

**FORT WALTON BEACH INSURANCE  
2018 LEWIS TURNER BLVD  
FORT WALTON BEACH, FL 32547**

**850-862-8082**

**ALEXANDER@CORNERSTONEFINANCIALCOACH.COM**

# INTRODUCTION

Life is full of surprises—some exciting, others unexpected. While we can't predict what tomorrow will bring, we can prepare for it. Whether it's a medical emergency, a sudden job change, or the simple reality of getting older, one truth remains: your family depends on the decisions you make today.

Many families have good intentions when it comes to financial protection, but they often delay taking action. It's easy to assume "we're covered" or that "there's still time." Unfortunately, waiting until a crisis strikes can lead to stress, debt, or missed opportunities for better coverage and peace of mind.

## **A Real-Life Example: The Gift of Preparedness**

A few years ago, I met a young father named Mark, a local electrician who lived here in Okaloosa County with his wife and two kids. When we first sat down, he admitted he'd always "meant to get life insurance" but never made the time. Money was tight, and like a lot of families, they figured there were more urgent things to pay for.

After reviewing his budget, we found a term life policy that fit comfortably into their monthly expenses—less than what he was spending on takeout lunches each week. He decided to move forward and said something I'll never forget:

“If something ever happens to me, I just want to know my kids will still have a home.”

About two years later, tragedy struck. Mark was in a car accident on his way home from work and didn't survive. When his wife, Sarah, called me weeks later, she was devastated—but she also said something powerful:

“Because of that policy, I didn't lose our house. I didn't have to move the kids out of their school. You helped us stay together.” That's the kind of protection life insurance provides. It's not about preparing for the worst—it's about giving your loved ones stability and dignity when they need it most.

For Mark's family, that small monthly decision became the foundation that allowed them to heal and move forward. And for many families like his, taking that single step can make all the difference in protecting the future they've worked so hard to build.

Stories like theirs are exactly why I wrote this guide. Securing your family's financial future doesn't have to be complicated or overwhelming. With a clear plan and the right guidance, you can take simple steps that make a lasting difference.

In the next few pages, you'll discover five practical steps to evaluate your current protection, strengthen your coverage, and create a financial safety net that supports your loved ones for years to come.

In the next few pages, you'll discover **five practical steps** to evaluate your current protection, strengthen your coverage, and create a financial safety net that supports your loved ones for years to come.

Each step builds on the one before it—starting with understanding where you stand today, and ending with a roadmap for long-term financial security. Whether you're planning for retirement, reviewing your Medicare options, or simply making sure your family is protected, these steps will help you move forward with clarity and confidence.

At Fort Walton Beach Insurance, our mission is simple: *to help families protect what matters most.* We believe peace of mind shouldn't come from luck—it should come from preparation.

So, take a deep breath, grab a cup of coffee, and let's begin your journey toward protecting your family's future—one step at a time.

## **Step 1: Evaluate Your Current Protection**

Before you can build a stronger financial foundation, you have to know where you stand today.

Most families have some form of protection already in place — a health plan through work, maybe a life insurance policy purchased years ago, or auto and homeowners coverage. But as life changes, so do your needs. What worked five or ten years ago may not fully protect you today.

Evaluating your current protection is the first step toward securing your family's future. It's about identifying gaps, reducing unnecessary overlap, and ensuring every dollar you spend on insurance is actually doing its job.

### **Start with a Simple Review**

Take a look at all your existing coverage:

- Health Insurance / Medicare – Are you enrolled in the right plan for your needs and budget? Are you taking advantage of all the benefits available to you?
- Life Insurance – Does your coverage still match your income, debt, and family size?
- Homeowners or Renters Insurance – Would your current policy truly replace what you own in the event of a loss?

- Auto Insurance – Have you updated your coverage for changes in drivers, vehicles, or usage?
- Disability or Income Protection – If you couldn't work for three months, how would your family manage?

Most people are surprised when they put all of this on paper. Gaps appear quickly – especially as children grow, jobs change, or retirement approaches. A short annual review helps you stay proactive instead of reactive.

### **Identify What's Missing**

Look for areas where you may be underprotected:

- Old policies that haven't been reviewed – Rates, coverage limits, and benefits change over time.
- Life transitions – Marriage, children, home purchases, or approaching retirement can all shift your needs.
- Inflation – The cost of living has risen significantly in recent years; make sure your coverage keeps up.
- Medical expenses – Even with good insurance, out-of-pocket costs can quickly add up without the right supplement.

It's not uncommon for families to discover they're paying for coverage that doesn't match their real priorities—or worse, that they lack protection where they need it most.

## How to Conduct a Quick Self-Audit

Here's a simple way to get started:

1. Gather all your current insurance documents.
2. List the type, company, coverage amount, and monthly cost.
3. Ask yourself three key questions for each:
  - Do I still need this coverage?
  - Is this enough coverage?
  - Is there a better option available today?
4. Schedule a review with a trusted advisor to interpret what you've found.

This process doesn't have to take more than an hour—but it could save your family thousands in the long run.

Pro Tip:

Keep a *"Protection Folder."*

Whether digital or physical, organize all your insurance policies, contact numbers, and beneficiaries in one place. If an emergency happens, your family will know exactly where to look.

## Your Next Step

Once you know where you stand, you can start strengthening your safety net. In Step 2, we'll look at how to protect your health and savings with the right Medicare or health insurance strategy—so you're never caught off guard by medical costs.

## Step 2: Securing Health Insurance for Your Family at Every Age

Because good health is your family's most valuable asset. Health insurance isn't just about covering medical bills — it's about protecting your family's stability. A sudden illness or accident can quickly become a financial crisis if the right coverage isn't in place. Whether you're insuring young children, managing care for aging parents, or preparing for retirement, your health plan should evolve with every stage of life.

### Why Health Coverage Matters More Than Ever

Medical costs continue to rise each year, and even minor procedures can create unexpected expenses. Without proper coverage, one emergency room visit or hospital stay can derail savings you've spent years building.

A solid health insurance plan:

Ensures access to quality care when you need it

Reduces out-of-pocket costs for doctor visits and prescriptions

Helps you plan for the unexpected

Protects your retirement savings from medical debt

Simply put: **your health coverage is the foundation of your financial security.**

### ***For Young Families***

If you have children or dependents, prioritize comprehensive coverage that includes preventive care, pediatric visits, and emergency protection. Check your policy's out-of-pocket maximum — it's your true limit on financial risk.

If you're self-employed or between jobs, explore Marketplace plans with premium subsidies that can make coverage surprisingly affordable.

### ***For Working Adults***

Many adults rely on employer-provided coverage, but it's still smart to review your options annually. Compare deductibles, prescription benefits, and provider networks.

If your employer offers multiple plans, don't assume the lowest premium is best — a slightly higher monthly cost can save you thousands if you need care later.

### ***For Retirees and Those Turning 65***

Medicare plays a central role in health protection during retirement, but it's easy to get lost in the details. Understanding the parts of Medicare is key:

**Part A:** Hospital insurance

**Part B:** Medical insurance

**Part C:** Medicare Advantage (bundled plans that may include extras like dental or vision)

**Part D:** Prescription drug coverage

Choosing between Medicare Advantage and Medigap depends on your health needs, budget, and travel habits. Working with a local licensed agent ensures you avoid costly mistakes or missed enrollment periods.

## Avoiding Common Mistakes

**Waiting too long to review your plan.** Life changes fast — a new job, marriage, or retirement can all affect your eligibility and costs.

**Focusing only on the premium.** A low premium with a high deductible might end up costing you more in the long run.

**Ignoring preventive benefits.** Most plans include free screenings and wellness visits that help you stay healthy and detect issues early.

**Skipping professional advice.** Health coverage is one area where guessing can be expensive. A licensed agent can help you compare plans, uncover hidden benefits, and ensure your family gets the protection it deserves.

### **Pro Tip:**

*Review your health coverage every year — especially during open enrollment.*

Even small adjustments can improve your benefits or reduce your monthly cost. Policies and provider networks change often, and what was best last year might not be the best now.

### **Your Next Step**

Once your health protection is in place, it's time to think beyond the present. In Step 3, we'll focus on how life insurance creates lasting financial protection — ensuring your loved ones are cared for, no matter what tomorrow brings.

## Step 3: Protect Your Income and Loved Ones with Life Insurance

*Because true peace of mind comes from knowing your family is secure—no matter what.*

Life insurance is one of the most meaningful financial decisions you can make. It's not just about preparing for the unexpected; it's about creating stability, opportunity, and lasting protection for the people you love most.

If something happened to you tomorrow, would your family be able to stay in the same home? Pay the bills? Continue their plans for the future?

That's what life insurance is designed to ensure—so your loved ones can keep living their lives without financial fear.

### **The Role of Life Insurance in Family Protection**

At its core, life insurance replaces lost income and covers essential expenses like mortgages, medical bills, education, and daily living costs. But depending on your goals, different types of life insurance serve different purposes.

The two most common forms—**term life** and **whole life**—each have unique strengths. Understanding both can help you choose the right balance for your family.



## **Term Life Insurance: Simple, Affordable Protection**

Term life insurance is designed for temporary needs. It provides coverage for a set period—often 10, 20, or 30 years—and pays a benefit if the insured passes away during that term.

It's an excellent choice for:

- Young families who need high coverage at a lower cost
- People paying off a mortgage or raising children
- Those wanting income replacement during working years

The advantage of term coverage is affordability. You can secure a large amount of protection for a relatively low premium. The tradeoff, however, is that the coverage expires at the end of the term, and it does not build cash value.

That's why many families start with term insurance for affordability—and later add permanent coverage for lifelong security.

## Whole Life Insurance: Lifetime Protection and Growth

Whole life insurance offers **permanent protection** that never expires as long as premiums are paid. It's more than just insurance – it's a financial asset that grows over time.

### Key Benefits of Whole Life Insurance

**Lifelong Coverage** – Your protection lasts forever, providing guaranteed peace of mind for your entire lifetime.

**Guaranteed Cash Value** – A portion of your premium builds cash value that grows tax-deferred and can be borrowed against for emergencies, education, or retirement.

**Tax Advantages** – Death benefits are typically tax-free, and your cash value growth isn't taxed while it remains in the policy.

**Locked-In Premiums** – Your rate never increases, even as you age or if your health changes.

**Living Benefits** – Some policies allow early access to benefits for chronic or critical illnesses.

**Legacy Planning** – Whole life policies help transfer wealth efficiently to the next generation, ensuring your loved ones and estate are protected.

Because of these features, many families use whole life insurance as a long-term wealth and legacy tool, not just protection against loss.

## **Finding the Right Balance**

In reality, many families benefit from a combination of both types of insurance.

Term life covers large, temporary needs—like income replacement while children are young or a mortgage balance.

Whole life provides permanent protection, cash value growth, and a financial legacy that lasts for generations.

This blended strategy allows you to enjoy affordable protection now, while building long-term stability for the future.

## **A Story of Smart Planning**

A couple I worked with, James and Emily, were in their early 30s with two young children. They wanted to protect their family but also start building wealth. We set up a plan that included both—a term policy large enough to cover income and debts if something happened, and a smaller whole life policy that would grow cash value over time.

Years later, James told me that the cash value in their whole life policy helped them cover a down payment on their first home. Their term policy gave them peace of mind while raising their kids, and their whole life coverage continued quietly building in the background.

That's the power of planning ahead—protection now and opportunity later.

## **Pro Tip:**

Think of term insurance as your short-term safety net and whole life insurance as your lifetime foundation. Together, they create a complete strategy that protects your family today and supports your future goals.

## **Your Next Step**

Now that your family's income and legacy are protected, it's time to prepare for life's next big challenge—long-term care and unexpected health needs.

In Step 4, we'll explore how to safeguard your retirement and assets with strategies that help you stay financially strong, no matter what tomorrow brings.



## **Step 4: Prepare for Long-Term and Unexpected Care Needs**

*Because your health and independence deserve to be protected just as much as your finances.*

No one likes to think about the possibility of needing long-term care – but it’s one of the most important parts of protecting your family’s future. Whether it’s due to aging, illness, or an unexpected accident, most people will need some form of ongoing care at some point in their lives.

Planning ahead ensures that when the time comes, you can focus on comfort and dignity – not on financial stress.

### **The Rising Cost of Care**

According to recent studies, the average cost of long-term care in Florida can range from \$4,000 to over \$9,000 per month, depending on the level of care required.

That means a single year of nursing care could cost more than \$100,000 – and those expenses aren’t typically covered by traditional health insurance or Medicare.

Without a plan, those costs can quickly deplete your retirement savings or create financial strain for your family.

## **Why Medicare Isn't Enough**

Medicare covers hospital stays, doctor visits, and short-term skilled nursing care following hospitalization – but it does not pay for ongoing custodial care like assistance with bathing, dressing, or daily activities.

That's where planning becomes critical. You can protect your assets and independence by exploring solutions designed specifically for long-term and unexpected care needs.

### **Options for Long-Term Care Protection**

#### **1. Traditional Long-Term Care Insurance**

These policies are designed to pay for the cost of care in a nursing home, assisted living facility, or even in your own home.

#### **Pros:**

Provides dedicated funds for care expenses  
Can preserve retirement and investment accounts

#### **Cons:**

Premiums may increase over time  
“Use it or lose it” – if you never need care, benefits aren't paid out

## 2. Hybrid Life Insurance with Long-Term Care Riders

This modern option combines life insurance with long-term care benefits, offering the best of both worlds.

You can access part of your policy's death benefit early if you need long-term care, but if you never use it, your family still receives the full life insurance benefit.

### **Pros:**

Guaranteed payout (for care or to beneficiaries)

Premiums typically stay level

Simplifies financial planning

### **Cons:**

Higher upfront cost than term insurance

Requires medical underwriting in most cases

This has become one of the most popular choices among families who want flexibility, predictability, and value for their premiums.

## 3. Self-Funding with Savings or Annuities

Some families prefer to set aside funds for care through dedicated savings, investment accounts, or annuities that offer income for life.

### **Pros:**

Full control of funds

Can supplement other care coverage

### **Cons:**

Requires significant assets or disciplined saving

Market fluctuations can impact available funds

## **A Story of Smart Preparation**

A client I worked with, Mary, was in her late 50s when her mother developed Alzheimer's. She saw firsthand how quickly long-term care costs can rise and decided to prepare early for her own future.

We set her up with a hybrid life insurance policy that included long-term care benefits. A few years later, when Mary had an unexpected surgery and needed recovery support at home, her policy helped pay for in-home care – giving her peace of mind and protecting her savings.

She later told me, *“It’s the best decision I ever made. I didn’t have to ask for help or drain my retirement. I was ready.”*

### **Key Benefits of Long-Term Care Planning**

- Protects retirement savings and family assets
- Reduces financial and emotional strain on loved ones
- Provides flexibility in how and where you receive care
- Ensures access to quality care and independence
- Offers peace of mind for you and your family

#### **Pro Tip:**

The best time to plan for long-term care is before you need it.

Premiums are lower when you're younger and healthy, and options are more flexible. Think of it as building a safety net that gives you control over your future care decisions.

## Your Next Step

You've now protected your health, income, and long-term care needs – the pillars of family security.

In **Step 5**, we'll bring it all together and show you how to build a complete financial safety net, integrating your insurance, savings, and estate plans into one cohesive strategy for lifelong stability.



## **Step 5: Build a Comprehensive Financial Safety Net**

*Because true financial protection comes from a plan that works together – not in pieces.*

By now, you've taken important steps toward protecting your health, income, and long-term care needs. But the final layer of security is coordination – bringing everything together into one clear plan that protects your assets, honors your wishes, and provides for your loved ones long after you're gone.

A comprehensive financial safety net isn't about having the most products – it's about making sure every piece of your financial life works in harmony.

### **The Power of Coordination**

Think of your financial plan like an orchestra.

Your health coverage, life insurance, long-term care, and investments each play a different instrument – but when they're in sync, they create balance and stability. When they're not, even small gaps or overlaps can cause unnecessary risk.

Proper coordination helps you:

- Avoid duplicate coverage or wasted premiums
- Reduce tax exposure and protect your retirement income
- Ensure your family knows what to do – and who to call – if something happens to you
- Align your financial decisions with your long-term goals and values

## **Bringing It All Together**

Here's how to integrate the protections you've already established:

### **1. Health Insurance & Medicare**

Review annually during open enrollment. Confirm that your coverage still meets your current medical needs and includes your preferred providers.

*Tip: Keep a written record of your Medicare plan, supplemental coverage, and key contact numbers in your estate binder.*

### **2. Life Insurance & Wealth Transfer**

Make sure your beneficiaries are up to date and that your coverage amount reflects your current lifestyle and debt levels. Whole life insurance can play a dual role here — providing lifelong protection and serving as a tax-efficient asset for estate transfer.

### **3. Long-Term Care Protection**

Coordinate your long-term care plan with your insurance and savings strategy.

For example, hybrid life policies can ensure unused benefits pass to your heirs, while traditional LTC coverage can preserve your retirement funds.

### **4. Savings, Investments & Annuities**

Diversify income streams for retirement, balancing safety and growth.

Work with a trusted financial professional to align your investment risk with your insurance protection — ensuring one supports the other.

# Estate Planning: Protecting Your Legacy with Irrevocable Trusts

*Because protecting what you've built is just as important as building it.*

Estate planning is more than deciding who gets what – it's about ensuring that your assets are protected, your wishes are honored, and your loved ones are cared for long after you're gone. One of the most powerful – yet often overlooked – tools for accomplishing this is the irrevocable trust.

## What Is an Irrevocable Trust?

An irrevocable trust is a legal arrangement where you transfer ownership of certain assets to the trust, which is managed by a trustee for the benefit of your chosen beneficiaries.

Once established, you generally cannot change or dissolve the trust without the consent of the beneficiaries or a court order.

While that may sound restrictive, this feature is exactly what gives the irrevocable trust its strength – protection.

## Key Benefits of an Irrevocable Trust

### 1. Asset Protection

Assets placed in an irrevocable trust are no longer legally owned by you – they belong to the trust.

This can protect them from:

Lawsuits or creditors

Long-term care spend-down requirements

Estate taxes and probate costs

This makes irrevocable trusts especially valuable for individuals who want to protect family assets like a home, business, or investment accounts.

## **2. Estate Tax Reduction**

By moving assets out of your personal estate, an irrevocable trust can reduce or eliminate estate taxes. This ensures that more of your wealth passes directly to your heirs, rather than being lost to taxation.

For high-net-worth families, this strategy can preserve hundreds of thousands of dollars in generational wealth.

## **3. Medicaid and Long-Term Care Planning**

One of the most practical uses of an irrevocable trust is in Medicaid planning.

If you need long-term care in the future, Medicaid has strict asset limits – and assets in your name must often be “spent down” before benefits begin.

By transferring certain assets into an irrevocable trust at least five years before applying for Medicaid, those assets are generally not counted toward eligibility, helping protect your home and savings from being consumed by care costs.

Example:

A couple who owns their home can place it in an irrevocable trust, continue living there, and still preserve it for their children – even if one or both eventually require nursing home care.

## **4. Legacy and Control**

Even though you relinquish ownership, you still have control over how and when your beneficiaries receive the trust’s assets.

You can structure distributions for specific purposes – such as education, first homes, or charitable giving – ensuring your legacy reflects your values and vision.



Feature	Revocable Trust	Irrevocable Trust
Can Be Changed or Canceled	✔ Yes	✘ No (generally permanent)
Ownership of Assets	Remains with the grantor	Transfers to the trust
Protection from Creditors / Lawsuits	✘ Limited	✔ Strong protection
Medicaid Planning Benefits	✘ None	✔ Assets may be shielded after 5 years
Estate Tax Reduction	✘ Minimal	✔ Significant potential reduction
Best For	Simplifying probate and managing assets	Asset protection, tax planning, and long-term care preservation

## **A Practical Example**

John and Linda, a retired couple in Fort Walton Beach, owned their home and a few rental properties they wanted to pass to their children. They worried that if one of them ever needed long-term care, those assets could be lost to nursing home costs. By placing their properties in an irrevocable trust, they were able

to:

Keep the rental income during their lifetime

Preserve ownership for their children

Maintain Medicaid eligibility down the road

When they finished the process, John said something that stuck with me:

“We didn’t just protect our money – we protected our family’s future.”

### **Pro Tip:**

Irrevocable trusts work best when established early.

Because Medicaid has a five-year look-back rule, the sooner you plan, the more flexibility and protection you have later. Always work with a qualified estate attorney and financial advisor to ensure your trust aligns with your insurance and retirement strategy.

## **Your Next Step: Protect and Prosper**

By completing all five steps, you've built a strong foundation to protect your family's future:

You've evaluated your current protection.

You've secured quality health coverage.

You've protected your income and legacy.

You've prepared for long-term care needs.

And now, you've coordinated your entire financial plan.

Your journey doesn't end here — it begins with consistent review and professional guidance.

**At Fort Walton Beach Insurance and Cornerstone Financial**, we're here to help you strengthen that foundation year after year — ensuring that your plan evolves with your life, your goals, and your family's future

We have an entire team

### **Our Team at Cornerstone Financial**

At Cornerstone Financial, we believe true peace of mind comes from having every aspect of your financial life working together. That's why our team brings a full spectrum of expertise under one roof — so you can make confident, informed decisions at every stage of life.

Our integrated team includes:

**Estate Planning Attorney** – Ensures your legal documents and trusts are structured to protect your legacy and fulfill your wishes.

**Certified Public Accountant (CPA)** – Provides expert tax guidance to help you keep more of what you've earned and coordinate tax-efficient strategies.

**Financial Advisor** – Designs personalized plans to balance protection, growth, and long-term security.

**Registered Investment Advisor (RIA)** – Manages investments with transparency and fiduciary responsibility, aligning your portfolio with your goals.

**Financial Needs Specialist** – Helps identify gaps in protection and coordinates life, health, and long-term care coverage to support your complete financial picture.

## **Closing Message: Let's Protect What Matters Most**

Your family's financial future deserves more than good intentions – it deserves a plan built with care, strategy, and foresight. Whether you're just getting started or reviewing your existing coverage, I invite you to schedule a free consultation with me today. Together, we'll make sure your plan supports not just your finances – but your peace of mind.

Visit: [FortWaltonBeachInsurance.com](http://FortWaltonBeachInsurance.com)

Call: 850-862-8082

Email: [alexander@cornerstonefinancialcoach.com](mailto:alexander@cornerstonefinancialcoach.com)

Let's build your legacy – one step at a time.