FOR PATIENTS & CARE PARTNERS

Legal and Financial Planning

Organizing decisions, documents and resources for life with Parkinson's

THE MAIN IDEA

Plan while the person with Parkinson's can clearly express choices and participate in decisions. Early planning preserves control, reduces family conflict and makes it easier for trusted people to help if health, mobility or thinking changes.

Build the legal foundation

- **Will and estate plan.** State who receives property, name an executor and address guardianship or trust needs. A will does not control every asset, so coordinate it with account ownership and beneficiary designations.
- **Durable financial power of attorney.** Authorizes a trusted agent to handle defined financial matters. State law and the document determine when authority begins and what the agent may do.
- **Health care power of attorney or proxy.** Names someone to make medical decisions if the person cannot communicate or decide. Choose someone willing to follow the person's values—not their own preferences.
- **Living will or advance directive.** Records treatment preferences for situations in which the person cannot speak for themselves. Requirements and names vary by state.
- **HIPAA or medical-information authorization.** Allows designated people to receive health information; this does not automatically give them decision-making authority.

Choose decision-makers carefully

- **Name primary and backup agents.** Consider reliability, judgment, location, family dynamics and willingness to serve.
- **Discuss the plan.** Explain values, care preferences, financial priorities and where documents are stored. Written authority is more useful when the agent understands the person.
- **Review capacity concerns early.** A diagnosis alone does not determine legal capacity. If thinking or communication is changing, seek individualized medical and legal guidance promptly.

STATE LAW MATTERS

Do not rely on an internet form without checking local requirements. Signing, witnessing, notarization, agent authority, advance-directive forms and estate rules vary by state.

Create the financial plan

1. **Make a complete inventory:** List income, bank and investment accounts, retirement plans, property, debts, recurring bills, insurance, digital assets and professional contacts.
2. **Estimate future care costs:** Plan for home modifications, transportation, medication, therapy, adaptive equipment, paid caregiving, adult day services, respite and possible residential care.
3. **Review insurance and benefits:** Understand health, prescription, disability, life and long-term-care coverage. Ask what is covered, excluded, preauthorized, time-limited or subject to cost sharing.
4. **Coordinate account titles and beneficiaries:** Compare wills or trusts with transfer-on-death, payable-on-death, retirement and insurance designations. Beneficiary forms may control assets outside the will.
5. **Simplify and automate cautiously:** Use direct deposit, automatic payments and account alerts where helpful. Keep enough oversight to catch errors, price changes and fraud.
6. **Schedule regular reviews:** Revisit the plan after a move, marriage, death, new caregiver, major health change, benefit decision or change in state law.

Benefits and care-cost questions

- **Social Security.** Ask about retirement, Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income eligibility; rules differ and work history, age, income and assets may matter.
- **Medicare and Medicaid.** Medicare does not generally cover ongoing custodial long-term care. Medicaid programs may help eligible people, but financial and functional rules vary by state.
- **Long-term-care insurance.** Confirm covered settings, elimination period, daily or monthly limits, inflation protection, claim triggers and required documentation.
- **Employer and retiree benefits.** Review disability, leave, health savings, life insurance, pension and caregiver-assistance provisions before employment changes.

Build the professional team

- **Elder-law or estate-planning attorney.** Use an attorney licensed in the relevant state, with experience in incapacity, long-term care, public benefits and estate coordination.
- **Financial and tax professionals.** Ask how they are paid, what credentials they hold, whether they act as a fiduciary, and how recommendations affect taxes, benefits and cash flow.
- **Social worker or benefits counselor.** A hospital, movement-disorder clinic, Area Agency on Aging, SHIP counselor or VA team can help identify programs and applications.

DO NOT TRANSFER ASSETS CASUALLY

Gifts, account retitling, adding joint owners or changing property can affect taxes, creditor exposure, control, Medicaid eligibility and inheritance. Get state-specific legal and tax advice before acting.

Printable planning checklist

Name: ______________________________ State of residence: ______________ Date reviewed: ______________

Use this as an organizer—not as a legal document. Record where signed originals are stored and who can access them.

✓	Item	Completed / reviewed	Location or contact
☐	Will and estate plan	____________	______________
☐	Durable financial power of attorney	____________	______________
☐	Health care proxy / medical power of attorney	____________	______________
☐	Living will / advance directive	____________	______________
☐	HIPAA or medical-information authorization	____________	______________
☐	Trust documents, if applicable	____________	______________
☐	Beneficiary designations and account ownership	____________	______________
☐	Insurance policies and benefit information	____________	______________
☐	Income, assets, debts and recurring bills inventory	____________	______________
☐	Medication list and health-care contacts	____________	______________
☐	Digital accounts, passwords and access plan	____________	______________
☐	Funeral, burial or memorial preferences	____________	______________
☐	Primary and backup legal / financial agents	____________	______________
☐	Emergency contact and caregiver backup plan	____________	______________

Key people

Attorney: ____ Phone: __________________________

Financial / tax professional: _________________________________ Phone: __________________________

Health care agent: ____ Phone: __________________________

Financial agent: ____ Phone: __________________________

Protect money and independence

- **Use account alerts and trusted contacts.** Banks and brokerages may allow transaction alerts or a trusted contact who can be notified about concerning activity without receiving account authority.
- **Separate help from ownership.** Adding someone to an account may create ownership, creditor, tax and inheritance consequences. A properly drafted power of attorney may be safer.
- **Watch for exploitation.** Red flags include secrecy, sudden withdrawals, unpaid bills, new "friends," pressure to sign, unexplained beneficiary changes or isolation from trusted people.
- **Protect personal information.** Do not provide passwords, Social Security numbers or payment information in response to an unexpected call, text or email. Verify requests through a known phone number.
- **Report urgent concerns.** Contact the financial institution promptly. Suspected exploitation may also be reported to local law enforcement or Adult Protective Services; call 911 for immediate danger.

Planning for veterans and caregivers

- **Review VA disability and health benefits.** Parkinson's may qualify for benefits in some service-connected circumstances. A VA-accredited representative can help with claims; verify accreditation before sharing information or paying fees.
- **Ask about caregiver programs.** VA Caregiver Support teams can explain support, respite and eligibility. Some qualifying caregivers may have access to legal and financial planning assistance.
- **Plan for VA fiduciary needs.** If VA determines a beneficiary cannot manage VA benefits, it may appoint a fiduciary. This is separate from a state power of attorney.

KEEP THE PLAN CURRENT

Review documents and account access at least annually and after any major health, family, financial or residential change. Destroy outdated copies carefully and tell trusted people where the current signed documents are stored.

Trusted resources

- **National Institute on Aging — Advance Care Planning:** https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/advance-care-planning
- **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau — Older Adults:** https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/resources-for-older-adults/
- **Eldercare Locator:** https://eldercare.acl.gov/ • 1-800-677-1116
- **Medicare State Health Insurance Assistance Program:** https://www.shiphelp.org/
- **VA Caregiver Support Line:** https://www.caregiver.va.gov/ • 1-855-260-3274
- **Parkinson's Foundation Helpline:** 1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636)

Recovery Health Tech contact: Val Brown • 1-504-450-6279 • val@recoveryhealthtech.com