Legacy Planning Checklist

Life Insurance Is One Piece of Your Complete Legacy Plan

A life insurance policy can protect your family's financial future — but it is only one component of a complete legacy plan. Without a will, powers of attorney, and coordinated estate planning, even a substantial death benefit can be delayed by probate, misdirected by outdated beneficiary forms, or diminished by unnecessary taxes. Use this checklist as a starting point for every area of your plan. Our team at the Thomas Prouse Agency is here to address the insurance components and connect you with the right legal and financial professionals for the rest.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS CHECKLIST
Section 1 — Life Insurance Planning
Section 2 — Essential Legal Documents
Section 3 — Beneficiary Designations & Asset Titling
Section 4 — Retirement & Long-Term Care Planning
Section 5 — Business Owners & Advanced Planning
Section 6 — Final Arrangements & Family Communication

Ready to review your insurance and legacy plan?

The Thomas Prouse Agency is an independent insurance agency with access to 40+ top-rated carriers. We specialize in life insurance, estate planning coordination, retirement income strategies, business continuity, and healthcare solutions — all tailored to your goals.

Book a consultation: thomasprouseagency.com | (520) 336-1910 | thomas@thomasprouseagency.com

Schedule a Free Consultation

SECTION 1 — LIFE INSURANCE PLANNING

Life insurance is the foundation of your legacy plan — it creates an immediate financial safety net for your family regardless of where you are in building your estate. Everything else in this checklist builds on top of it.

☐ **Determine your coverage need**

Coverage is needs-based, not formula-based. Consider: How long would your family need income replaced? What debts would they inherit? Are there future expenses like college or a mortgage? Even a modest policy creates an immediate financial safety net. Use our Life Insurance Needs Calculator at thomasprouseagency.com to find the right number for your situation.

☐ **Identify the right type of policy**

Term life for mortgage protection and income replacement. Whole life or Indexed Universal Life (IUL) for permanent coverage, cash value accumulation, and estate planning strategies.

☐ **Review existing policies — are they still adequate?**

Life events (marriage, children, business launch, pay increase) often mean your original coverage is no longer sufficient.

☐ **Confirm policy ownership and beneficiary alignment**

Life insurance death benefits are generally income-tax free to your beneficiaries. However, who owns the policy determines whether the proceeds are included in your estate.

☐ **Explore Indexed Universal Life (IUL) for permanent coverage, tax-advantaged cash value growth, and living benefits (chronic/terminal illness).**

☐ **Confirm life insurance coordinates with your estate plan**

If your trust is named as beneficiary, confirm the trust is properly drafted to receive the proceeds.

Notes

SECTION 2 — ESSENTIAL LEGAL DOCUMENTS

These foundational documents ensure your wishes are honored if you become incapacitated or pass away. Without them, courts — not your family — make the decisions.

☐ **Last Will & Testament**

Directs distribution of your assets, names an executor, and (if you have children) designates a guardian. Without a will, state intestacy laws determine who inherits.

☐ **Revocable Living Trust (optional but recommended)**

Avoids probate, keeps your estate private, and allows seamless transfer of assets. Works alongside your will — not instead of it.

☐ **Pour-Over Will**

If you have a living trust, a pour-over will 'catches' any assets not titled in the trust and directs them into it at death.

☐ **Durable Financial Power of Attorney**

Authorizes a trusted person (your 'agent') to manage finances, pay bills, and make financial decisions if you are incapacitated. Without this, a court must appoint a conservator.

☐ **Healthcare Power of Attorney / Healthcare Proxy**

Names someone to make medical decisions on your behalf if you cannot. Different from a Living Will — this empowers a person, not just a document.

☐ **Advance Healthcare Directive / Living Will**

States your wishes for life-sustaining treatment, artificial nutrition, and end-of-life care. Relieves your family of impossible decisions during a crisis.

☐ **HIPAA Authorization**

Allows your named agents and family members to access your medical records and discuss your care with providers.

Notes

SECTION 3 — BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS & ASSET TITLING

Beneficiary designations and how assets are titled override your will. A mismatch between your will and your beneficiary forms can send assets to the wrong person — or to your estate, triggering probate.

☐ **Review all life insurance beneficiary designations**

Primary and contingent. Confirm designations are current after any marriage, divorce, birth, or death.

☐ **Review retirement account beneficiaries (401(k), IRA, pension)**

These accounts pass directly to named beneficiaries and bypass your will and probate. Naming a trust as beneficiary requires careful planning with your attorney.

☐ **Review annuity and financial account beneficiaries**

Check all bank and brokerage accounts for Payable-on-Death (POD) or Transfer-on-Death (TOD) designations.

☐ **Review real estate titling**

Jointly held property with right of survivorship transfers automatically. Property titled in your name alone goes through probate unless transferred to a trust.

☐ **Fund your trust (if applicable)**

Retitling assets into the name of your trust is the step most people miss. An unfunded trust provides no probate protection.

Notes

SECTION 4 — RETIREMENT & LONG-TERM CARE PLANNING

Outliving your assets is a greater risk than dying too early. Integrate retirement and long-term care planning into your legacy strategy now.

☐ **Create a retirement income plan**

Map out guaranteed income sources (Social Security, pension, annuity) vs. portfolio withdrawals. Confirm your plan survives a market downturn in early retirement.

☐ **Review annuity options for guaranteed income**

Fixed and indexed annuities can create a 'personal pension' — guaranteed income you cannot outlive. Ask us about annuity solutions from our carrier network.

☐ **Address long-term care risk**

Approximately 70% of Americans turning 65 will need some form of long-term care during their lifetime. Without a plan, costs can deplete your estate. Options include: LTC insurance, hybrid life/LTC policies, and self-funding strategies.

☐ **Review Medicare coverage and supplement options**

Original Medicare has gaps. A Medicare Supplement (Medigap) or Medicare Advantage plan should align with your healthcare and financial goals.

☐ **Consider an Irrevocable Medicaid Trust (if applicable)**

For clients who may need Medicaid-funded long-term care, proper planning 5+ years in advance can protect significant assets.

Notes

SECTION 5 — BUSINESS OWNERS & ADVANCED PLANNING

If you own a business, your estate plan is incomplete without a business succession strategy. These items apply to business owners and high-net-worth clients.

☐ **Business succession plan**

Who runs the business if you die, become disabled, or want to retire? A written succession plan — backed by proper insurance and legal documents — is essential.

☐ **Buy-Sell Agreement**

A funded buy-sell agreement ensures your business interest is purchased at a fair price by your partners (or the business), providing liquidity for your heirs.

☐ **Key Person Insurance**

Protects the business from the financial impact of losing a critical employee or owner.

☐ **Review entity structure and operating agreements**

Confirm your LLC, partnership, or corporation documents address what happens to your ownership interest at death or incapacity.

☐ **Estate tax exposure analysis**

Current federal estate tax exemptions are high (over $15 million per person in 2026), but thresholds may change and your situation may still warrant planning.

☐ **Charitable giving strategies**

Donor-Advised Funds, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and charitable bequests in your will can create a lasting legacy while reducing your taxable estate.

Notes

SECTION 6 — FINAL ARRANGEMENTS & FAMILY COMMUNICATION

The most thorough legal plan fails if your family cannot find your documents or does not understand your wishes.

☐ **Create a Family Information Letter**

Document locations of all key documents, account numbers, insurance policies, trusted advisors (attorney, CPA, financial advisor), digital accounts/passwords, and final wishes.

☐ **Tell your executor and agents where to find your documents**

Your executor cannot act if they cannot find your will. Store originals securely and share the location with trusted people.

☐ **Pre-plan or document funeral/burial preferences**

Burial vs. cremation, service preferences, and whether you have a pre-paid funeral contract.

☐ **Review and update your plan every 3–5 years — or immediately after major life events (marriage, divorce, birth, death, significant asset changes, or moving to a new state)**

Notes

Legal Document Services

This checklist is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, tax, or financial advice.

For the preparation of wills, powers of attorney, trusts, advance directives, and other estate planning documents, the Thomas Prouse Agency facilitates the entire process — gathering your information and submitting it directly to our network of licensed estate planning attorneys and paralegals who will prepare your documents.

Schedule a Free Consultation