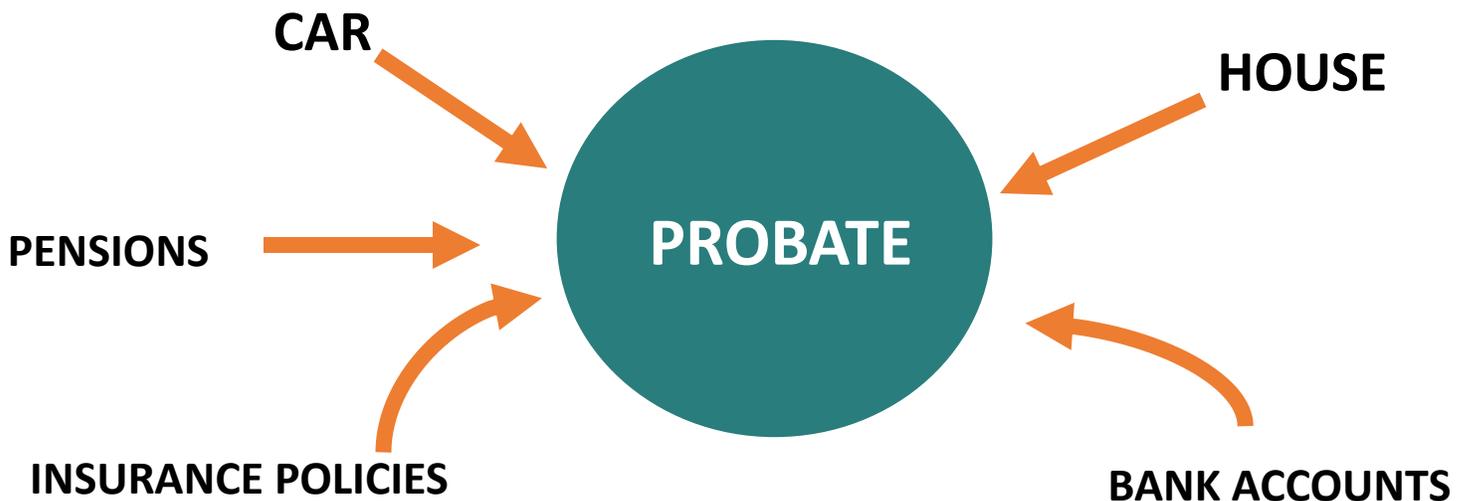


**At the end of life, transition is never easy,  
but a family member passing away doesn't have to be expensive.**

Let's plan ahead and keep our assets within our families and community.  
If you've done your will, that's great! **But your work isn't done.**

**This is not legal advice.** Please consult an attorney about your particular situation.



A will simply indicates where you want things to go. But there's another step (probate) that details how those items will get to the people you have designated. Probate is expensive (often several hundred dollars) and takes 6 months to a year to complete. Thankfully, there's steps you can take today to plan ahead and have items go to the people you want to receive them AND avoid the expensive and timely probate process.

## What is probate?

Probate is a process where the state may divide assets amongst family members and provide a mechanism for how those assets can get to the family member, because not enough planning was put place. If you take the initiative to have these conversations now, YOU get to decide who receives your belongings and avoid probate, saving your family hundreds of dollars.

**When you make these decisions you save time and money. The more items that have to go through probate the more expensive the process becomes! This is because your family has to pay fees depending on the size of your estate (the amount of items passing through probate). So you want to pass your things around probate, keeping the estate nice and small.**

**Learn how to prepare ahead of time and avoid probate! More information on the back.**

To apply for free legal help please visit: [MVLSLAW.ORG/APPLY-FOR-SERVICES](https://mvlslaw.org/apply-for-services)

More Resources Available: [MVLSLAW.ORG/ADV-PLANNING](https://mvlslaw.org/adv-planning)

Or call intake (9 am - 12 pm, Monday - Thursday) at 1 (800) 510-0050

## Common Myths

Let's separate fact from fiction.

1. It's not only the wealthy who need to plan ahead. Having your documents in order makes it possible to access tax credits from the city which keep property taxes low, and passing belongings to family members preserves the wealth of our families and communities.
2. It's not overly complicated. Engaging in conversation with your family will help reveal who to list as part of your plans. After all, who knows your family better than you do? Once you've identified these people, preparing the documents is fairly simple and if you income qualify, MVLS will prepare the documents for free.

## Getting Around Probate

Here are steps you can take to pass your things to whomever you like, WITHOUT having to go through probate. Taking these steps lets you protect your assets during your lifetime as you continue to be the sole owner of these assets, but when you pass, they pass outside of probate to the people you have chosen to receive them.

**Naming beneficiaries:** You can pass your **car** to a family member by making a vehicle beneficiary designation. The cost is \$20 and can be done at [https://securetransactions.mva.maryland.gov/emvastore/\(S\(pxzjjq4vk5oci0ab3qz3nkvk\)\)/MustHave2.aspx](https://securetransactions.mva.maryland.gov/emvastore/(S(pxzjjq4vk5oci0ab3qz3nkvk))/MustHave2.aspx) , or at a local MVA office. This will permit you to remain the sole owner of your vehicle, but when you pass, it will go to the person you designated as the beneficiary.

**Insurance policies, retirement accounts, pensions, even lottery winnings,** will transfer similarly to your designated family or friends with a "payable upon death." You contact the company and instruct them as to who you would like to receive the benefits after you pass away. This person will be your "beneficiary". You can make these changes online or by calling the company and requesting a form. There should be no costs to make your beneficiary designations.

The balance of your **checking and saving accounts** may also pass with a "payable upon death." You can pass the balance of these accounts to a designated person. This is better than sharing accounts now, because you are able to avoid the financial entanglements that comes with sharing a credit card or check book.

Houses can pass in the same way! You can pass the house using a *life estate deed*. This will keep the house in your name, and after you pass, it will transfer the house to whomever you name, just like bank accounts, insurance policies and vehicles. Doing a life estate deed is a much safer option than adding someone to your deed as a joint owner, making your home vulnerable to their creditors.

All of these steps can be passed without the assistance of an attorney EXCEPT the life estate deed. Now all that is left to pass are the things which are particularly priceless to our family, like heirlooms, furniture, paintings, photographs, and the family bible – all of these things will be passed on to the people you designate using the will.

**To get help with a life estate deed, feel free to contact MVLS. If you haven't done any life estate planning, contact MVLS to protect yourself and your family.**

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