

## An overview of a basic estate plan

If you don't have an estate plan, this would be a great time to prepare one, because you can include arrangements for your pet right from the onset. If you do have an estate plan, you can modify it to include your pet. And don't let the term estate plan intimidate you. Estate plans are not just for the rich. Almost all of us have estates. Our estates include all that we own – even if it is only a baseball card collection.

A reasonably complete estate plan might include the following documents:

- last will and testament;
- trusts (including living or *inter vivos* trusts, testamentary trusts, charitable trusts, insurance or wealth replacement trusts);
- durable power of attorney for financial matters;
- power of attorney for health care matters (sometimes known as powers of attorney for personal care, medical powers of attorney, or advance directives);
- directive to physicians in the event you are in a terminal condition and cannot express your treatment desires (often called living wills); and
- body disposition desires (such as anatomical gifts and burial or cremation instructions).

Of course, if your estate is composed solely of a baseball card collection, your estate plan documents might include only a power of attorney for health matters (to give someone the authority to act for you if you become too sick or disabled to act for yourself), and a last will and testament (naming the person or organization to whom you are gifting your baseball card collection). If the collection is valuable, you could cover it with a power of attorney for property, allowing someone else to sell it on your behalf under specified circumstances.

Since many people amass large, multi-faceted estates, they need more planning and more instruments to manage their assets and affairs under a variety of circumstances, including death. People who own one or more pet animals need to exercise extra diligence to ensure their pets' survival if they are not able to look after them.

Preparing a comprehensive estate plan that includes the relevant documents requires the services of an attorney and possibly a certified public or chartered accountant. While there are many such professionals who