

Choosing a Guardian – A Helpful Checklist

Deciding on a guardian is very emotional for parents to plan together. Aim for the best match for your children with the options available to you. This would be better than leaving the decision up to a judge who does not know your family or your child.

The following is a checklist of questions that I suggest parents consider when making this decision:

- 1) List all of the personal details you know about the proposed guardian and then how these details might affect your child.
 - What is the age of the proposed guardian?
 - What is his/her marital status?
 - What is his/her lifestyle? (Is the proposed guardian retired, a workaholic, have extra time to devote to child care?)
 - Is his/her current financial status relatively stable?
 - What is his/her religion, religious practices or culture?
 - What values or morals does the proposed guardian hold?
 - Would the proposed guardian be able to provide a lifestyle for your child that is close to what you have provided or would want for your child?
- 2) Where does the proposed guardian live?
 - Would moving to live with the proposed guardian mean moving your child out of their school district and away from friends, church or other religious groups, sports teams, doctors or therapists?
 - How would a move impact your child emotionally?

- 3) Does the proposed guardian have children who are close in age to your child? If so, what is the relationship between your child and the proposed guardian's children?
- 4) Does the proposed guardian practice parenting methods that are similar to yours? For example, would they use corporal punishment to discipline, would they practice attachment parenting methods or do "time outs"?
- 5) Does your child have any special emotional or physical needs that the guardian will have to address? Will the guardian be willing to or have the time and physical ability to work with the child and his/her therapists, counselors, etc.?
- 6) Do you want to name the guardian as the trustee of the testamentary trust in your Will? If so, do you trust the guardian's ability to manage financial decisions? Or is there another individual who would work well with the guardian to manage the trust?

After you and your spouse have decided on a proposed guardian, contact that person and discuss your decision with them. Make sure this person agrees with your decision and believes himself or herself to be physically and financially able to take on this role should they be called upon to do so.

I recommend naming a secondary guardian as well. This is done in case the primary individual you have named is for any reason unable or unwilling to accept the role. I would especially recommend this if you have named your parents or your in-laws as the proposed guardians and they are close to the age of senior citizens.

My Services

If you have any questions about choosing a guardian for your children or have other estate planning questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through my online law office at www.kimbrolaw.com, by email at slk@kimbrolaw.com or by telephone: (910) 619-5530.