



**CERETA A. LEE
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
REGISTER OF WILLS**

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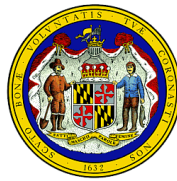
Phone: 301-952-3250
Fax: 301-952-4489

Directions

From 95, take exit 17 to Route 202/ Landover Road towards Upper Marlboro. Make a right onto Old Marlboro Pike Road. Old Marlboro Pike Road turns into Main Street. Courthouse is on the left.

From Route 4 South/ Pennsylvania Avenue, take exit ramp to Upper Marlboro/ Equestrian Center. Turn left onto Water Street. Turn Right onto Main Street courthouse will be on right.

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The Register of Wills offers free speaking engagements to your community or church group. If you are interested in scheduling a speaker for your group, please contact us.



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**PREPARATION IS  
THE BEST  
PROTECTION**

ASSISTING THE FAMILIES OF PRINCE GEORGE'S  
COUNTY IN THEIR TIME OF NEED



[www.registers.state.md.us](http://www.registers.state.md.us)



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Every year a vast majority of Americans die without a Will. They lose the opportunity to determine how to leave their assets to their loved ones. However, you can avoid the same mistake. Creating a plan is the first step to protecting your family, and the assets you have accumulated over a lifetime.

As your Register of Wills, I believe "Preparation is the Best Protection." It is important for you to know what to do before and after a loved one passes away. The Register of Wills Office provides seminars and information booths to assist in the process of settling an estate. So when the time comes to use our office, your pre-planning will reduce some of the stress and burden to your family.

The Register of Wills Office takes pride in serving the families of Prince George's County with professionalism, compassion, dignity and respect. Please feel free to contact us with your questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Register of Wills  
Prince George's County

All required forms may be obtained from the Register of Wills Office or online at [www.registers.state.md.us](http://www.registers.state.md.us).

**Distribution of Property If  
You Die Without A Will  
If the Decedent is survived by:**

1. **Spouse and minor children of the decedent:** Spouse receives one-half, children share remaining one-half
2. **Spouse and Children (all adult) of the decedent:** Spouse receives \$15,000 plus one-half of remaining estate, Children divide balance (the interest of a predeceased child passes to issue of that child.)
3. **Children only of the decedent:** Children (does not include step-children) divide entire estate (the interest of a predeceased child passes to issue of that child)
4. **Spouse and parents of the decedent:** Spouse receives \$15,000 plus one-half of remaining estate, both parents divide balance or surviving parent takes balance
5. **Spouse of the decedent without other heirs listed above:** Spouse receives entire estate
6. **Parents of the decedent without other heirs listed above:** Both parents divide entire estate or surviving parent takes all
7. **Brothers/sisters of the decedent without heirs listed above:** Brothers and sisters divide estate equally (share of deceased sibling goes to their issue-nieces and nephews of the decedent)
8. **Grandparents without other heirs listed above:** Grandparents divide entire estate or, if deceased, to their issue (see applicable law for details)
9. **Great-Grandparent without other heirs listed above:** Great-grandparents divide entire estate or, if deceased, to their issue (see applicable law for details)
10. **Step-children:** If there are no heirs listed above
11. **No living heirs or step-children:** If decedent was a recipient of long-term care benefits under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program at time of death, net estate is paid to Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Otherwise, the net estate is paid to the Board of Education.

Most people unfortunately do not have Wills. Due to lack of time or not realizing the importance, many people tend to put off writing a Will. However, an up-to-date Will can assure that all your assets are distributed according to your wishes. A Will is especially important if you have minor children because it allows you to designate a Guardian in case you and your child's parent pass away before your children reach adulthood.

Despite the importance of Wills, most Americans die *intestate*—without a Will. If you die intestate, the Register of Wills Office or Orphans' Court will appoint a personal representative to distribute your estate according to Maryland law, and designate a Guardian for any minor children. In other words, Maryland law, *not you*, decides what happens to your assets and the care of your minor children.

As you can see, the importance of a Will should not be overlooked. With various state laws and complex terms within a Will, you should consult an attorney when writing your Will.

Remember, you can **prepare & protect** your family through a Will which:

- Indicates where your assets and property will go after your death,
- Names a personal representative (or executor) to administer the Will and describe his or her powers and compensation, and
- Designates a Guardian for your minor children and their property.



### Administration of Estates

Administration of Estates is the management of the deceased's assets, which includes the collection of property, payment of expenses and debts, and distribution to the heirs or legatees. Our Office will facilitate this process for you and your family.

### Guardianship of Minors

If you do not have a Will, the Orphans' Court will appoint a Guardian to be responsible for your minor children.

### Safekeeping of Your Will

Once your Will is prepared, the Office will store your Will in a vault that is secure and fireproof.

### Public Computers

Any resident of Prince George's County may conduct genealogical research and view estates in our office.

## A Checklist for Your Will

### 1. **Decide what property to include in your Will.**

To get started, list your probate and non-probate assets. Probate assets typically pass through a Will and include assets titled in your name individually such as liquid assets (cash, checking, savings accounts, money market accounts and CDs), non-retirement plans (stocks, bonds and mutual funds), real estate holdings, personal property and your share of property held as tenants in common. Keep in mind that if you're married, each spouse makes a separate Will. Non-probate assets include annuities, life insurance policies (or anything with a named beneficiary), and trusts. *Note: Any property you own jointly passes automatically to the surviving joint owner.*

### 2. **Decide who will inherit your property.**

List your beneficiaries and decide to whom you leave your specific assets.

### 3. **Choose a Personal Representative (also known as an executor) to handle your estate.**

Every Will must name someone as their personal representative (executor), to carry out the terms of the Will. Duties include distributing assets, paying outstanding debts and taxes, canceling credit cards and notifying the Social Security Administration of your death. You can name a spouse, sibling, close friend or attorney as your personal representative.

### 4. **Choose a Guardian for your children.**

If your children are under 18, decide who you want to raise them in the very unlikely event that you and their other parent can not. If you leave an inheritance to children or young adults, you can name the same person or another adult as the custodian or trustee to manage the children's financial matters.

### 5. **Store your Will in a safe place.**

Keep your Will in a secure and fireproof environment such as a safe deposit box. Give a copy of your Will to your personal representative and tell them where your original Will is and how to get access to it when the time comes.

### 6. **Keep your Will current.**

Update your Will every three to five years to make sure it continues to meet your needs. This can be done readily by amending it through a codicil (a supplement to your current will) or you and your attorney can write a new Will to supersede the old one.

### 7. **What about a Living Will?**

A Living Will describes the medical care you want (or don't want) if you become terminally ill or permanently unconscious. A Living Will is also known as an advance healthcare directive or health care proxy. You may also designate a power of attorney for healthcare, someone you trust to act in accordance with your stated intentions.