DEFINITIONS	
EXPLANATION OF ESTATE PLANNING TERMS	
Will	A legal document that outlines how a person's assets and property should be distributed after their death. It may also designate guardians for minor children and specify funeral arrangements.
Trust	An arrangement where a person (the trustor) transfers assets to a trustee to manage for the benefit of beneficiaries. It can help avoid probate and provide more control over asset distribution.
Beneficiary	An individual or entity entitled to receive benefits from a will, trust, or insurance policy. In a will or trust, beneficiaries are typically the ones who inherit assets.
Executor/Personal Representative	The individual or institution responsible for carrying out the instructions in a will, including managing the estate, paying debts, and distributing assets to beneficiaries.
Trustee	The person or institution responsible for managing the assets in a trust according to the terms set by the trustor. They have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the beneficiaries.
Power of Attorney	A legal document that allows someone to act on another person's behalf in financial or legal matters. It can be general or limited in scope.
Living Will/Health Care Directive	A document that outlines a person's wishes regarding medical treatment and end-of-life care, in case they become unable to communicate their preferences.
Health Care Proxy/Medical Directive	A document that designates someone to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are incapacitated and unable to communicate your wishes.
Letter of Instruction	A non-legally binding document that provides guidance for your executor, trustee, or family members about personal or financial matters that aren't covered in your will or trust.
Guardianship	The legal relationship where a person is appointed to care for another person (such as a minor child or an incapacitated adult). A guardian is responsible for the person's well-being and, in some cases, their financial affairs.
EXPLANATION OF ESTATE ADMINISTRATION TERMS	
Probate	The legal process by which a deceased person's will is validated, debts are paid, and assets are distributed according to the instructions in the will (or state law if there is no will). Probate involves the court overseeing the administration of the estate.
Testate	When someone dies **with** a valid will. The estate is administered according to the instructions in the will, and the probate process is usually smoother than if there is no will (intestate).
Intestate	When someone dies **without** a valid will. If there is no will, the estate is distributed according to state laws, which often prioritize close family members (spouse, children, etc.).

Executor	The person named in the will to manage the deceased's estate. The executor is responsible for carrying out the instructions in the will, paying off debts, and distributing assets to beneficiaries. If there is no will, a court-appointed administrator takes on this role.
Administrator	If a person dies intestate (without a will), the court appoints an administrator to handle the estate. The administrator's role is similar to an executor but is appointed by the court rather than named in the will.
Probate Court	The court that oversees the probate process. In many jurisdictions, probate court handles matters related to wills, estates, guardianships, and conservatorships. Its role is to ensure the proper distribution of a decedent's estate according to the law.
Letters Testmentary	A document issued by the probate court that gives the executor the legal authority to act on behalf of the decedent's estate. It proves that the executor has been officially appointed and can begin distributing assets and handling debts.
Letters of Administration	If there is no will (intestate), the court issues **letters of administration** to the appointed administrator. This document grants them the authority to manage the estate, much like Letters Testamentary for an executor.
Probate Assets	Assets that are part of the decedent's estate and are subject to probate. These typically include property held in the decedent's name alone and assets that have no beneficiary designations, such as a home, bank accounts, or personal property.
Non-Probate Assets	Assets that pass to beneficiaries outside of the probate process. Examples include life insurance policies, retirement accounts (like 401(k) or IRAs), and assets held in a trust, which transfer directly to beneficiaries without court involvement.
Attorney-ad-Litem	This attorney is appointed to act in the best interest of a person or group who cannot represent themselves during legal proceedings. This often happens in cases involving minors, incapacitated individuals, or other vulnerable parties.
SUMMARY PROBATE PROCEDURES DEFINED	
Muniment of Title	A **Muniment of Title** is a **court order** that **recognizes a will as valid and allows it to serve as proof of ownership** for transferring property—**without appointing an executor** or going through full probate.
Small Estate Affidavit	Used when the **estate is valued at $75,000 or less** (excluding homestead and exempt property), and there's **no will**.
Transfer of Death Deeds/Lady Bird Deeds	Deed that transfer title on the death of the grantor that is recorded in the county court. Transfer is automatic upon death.

Joint Ownership with Right of Survivorship	Property held jointly (like bank accounts) automatically passes to the surviving owner when one dies.
Beneficiary Designation	Assets like life insurance, retirement accounts (IRAs, 401(k)s), and payable-on-death (POD) or transfer-on-death (TOD) accounts go directly to named beneficiaries.
Revocable Trusts	Assets placed in a trust during the decedent’s lifetime avoid probate and are managed/distributed by a trustee according to the trust terms.