

CHECKLIST FOR ANYONE FIVE YEARS FROM RETIREMENT

**EDUCATE YOURSELF**

Ask questions, read books, watch videos, talk with trusted counsel. You don't need to become an expert. But develop a degree of financial confidence that allows you to ask the right questions to get the answers you need.

**MAKE A PLAN**

You can do this yourself or engage the help of a financial advisor. Find out where you stand today and estimate how much money you'll need to retire. Setting appropriate expectations can mean all the difference to embarking on a successful retirement.

**BECOME FAMILIAR WITH AGE MILESTONES**

At 59 ½, you can start withdrawing from retirement plans without paying a penalty. If you retire early, how will you bridge the gap to avoid any penalties? At 62, you can start claiming Social Security at something less than your full benefit. At 65, you become eligible for Medicare. At 67, you will reach your Full Retirement Age at which the IRS says you can receive your full benefit. At 70, you can begin receiving the largest Social Security benefit for which you are eligible.

**DETERMINE WHEN YOU WILL CLAIM SOCIAL SECURITY**

Every year you wait past age 62, the larger your benefit will grow. Knowing when you plan to start drawing benefits will be the result of many factors unique to your situation and can impact related financial decisions. This can be complicated, so find a trusted advisor to offer ideas and guidance.

**THINK HARD ABOUT HOW YOU'LL SPEND YOUR TIME**

Retirement should be seen as moving towards something better, rather than leaving the rat race behind. Traveling and golf will take only so much time before boredom creeps in. Thoughtfully consider how you will spend your time, and whether it will align with your values and goals.

**CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS FOR HEALTH INSURANCE**

If you retire before age 65, how will you bridge the gap until you can enroll in Medicare? What are the costs and coverages associated with COBRA; will your former employer subsidize any amount? Can you enroll in a working spouse's plan? What are the costs for private insurance, or the public marketplace? Many pre-retirees are shocked to learn that healthcare can be their biggest expense in retirement until they enroll in Medicare. Get educated about your options to set expectations and make informed decisions.

**UPDATE YOUR ESTATE PLAN**

By the time you consider retirement, your situation is likely quite different than the last time you updated your estate plan. Since you are in planning mode, get it updated to reflect your current wishes. If you don't have an estate plan, get one now.

**MAKE CATCHUP CONTRIBUTIONS**

For those 50 or older the IRS allows for additional contributions to employer retirement plans. Take advantage of this opening for the next five years until you retire, allowing for more growth and support in your retirement foundation.