

Financial Services Providers: "Questions to Ask Yourself" Checklist

Before you select a financial services provider, you need to interview yourself. This checklist of questions will give you a better understanding of the type of relationship you are looking for with a financial services provider as well as the types of products and services you may be interested in.

Yes No

Do I seek continuous and ongoing investment-related advice?

Yes No

Do I seek specific investment recommendations with advice being incidental?

Yes No

Do I prefer to discuss and authorize all transactions?

Yes No

Do I prefer to delegate investment-related decisions and transactions?

Yes No

Do I seek comprehensive financial, estate and tax planning?

Yes No

Do I seek only investment management?

Yes No

Are insurance-related products an acceptable type of investment?

Yes No

Are mutual funds and ETFs acceptable types of investments?

Yes No

Are individual stocks and bonds acceptable types of investments?

Yes No

Are commissions an acceptable form of payment for service?

Yes No

Are fees an acceptable form of payment for service?

Financial Services Providers: "Questions to Ask the Provider" Checklist

- Is my financial profile representative of your client base?
- What is your academic and professional background?
- Do you have professional designations or other credentials?
- What is the "standard of care" for my account?
- What other services do you provide?
- Who else may be handling my account?
- How is your compensation structured?

You can complete this section of the checklist yourself while meeting with a prospective service provider or you can request that they complete the checklist - in writing - prior to you meeting with them.

Most financial services providers have no record of disciplinary actions against them. You can confirm this by contacting your state securities regulator. In Michigan, it's the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) – Securities Division or through the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) website.

Contact LARA – Securities Division at 517-241-6345 or visit the FINRA website at:

<http://www.finra.org/brokercheck>

To evaluate a professional designation, use the following checklist - or have the designation-holder use the checklist - to get you complete information. This information will help you determine whether the designation has any value or application to your financial circumstances.

Professional Designations: "What to Know" Checklist

- Visit the website of the organization issuing the designation
- Obtain a brochure or pamphlet
- Know the prerequisites for obtaining the designation
- Know the coursework and format for how the designation is earned
- Know the continuing education requirements
- Know if an investor complaint or public disciplinary process exists
- Know if the designation has third-party accreditation

For more information on professional designations for the financial services industry, you can visit the FINRA website at: www.finra.org.

Whether you use a financial services provider or you are a “do-it-yourselfer,” investments are going to be selected and bought. To be informed, aware and in control over the handling of your accounts, and to greatly reduce the potential for making a poor investment decision, you need to be able to check-off the following:

Selecting Investments: “What to Know” Checklist

- Purpose of the investment¹
- Consistent with investment objective, goal timeframe and risk tolerance
- How the investment fits into the overall investment strategy²
- The cost to buy, hold and sell the investment

¹ For example, does the investment provide the potential for long-term growth? Does it provide current income or provide liquidity at a pre-determined date?

² Just adding another investment for the sake of adding another investment isn't necessarily in your best interest. How does the new investment fit in with what you already own? Does the investment bring further diversification? Does it increase the potential for growth or provide additional income? Does it reduce risk?