

Appendix C: Beneficiary Audit Sheet

The annual check for the most failure-prone part of estate planning.

Beneficiary designations sit on forms at financial institutions, not inside your trust document. That makes them invisible to the trust and easy to forget. A designation set up ten years ago, never reviewed, can route an entire IRA or insurance payout to the wrong person, even when your trust says something different.

This is the audit that catches it.

Use this sheet once a year on Day 18, and after any Day 19 life-event trigger that changes who you want named. The audit takes fifteen to twenty minutes if everything's correct. If something needs to change, log the update on Appendix B.

A Word on POD and TOD Accounts

Some bank and brokerage accounts carry a beneficiary directly on the account itself. Banks call this a **POD beneficiary**, short for Payable on Death. Brokerages call the same thing a **TOD beneficiary**, short for Transfer on Death. Either way, the rule is the same.

When the account holder dies, that account generally passes directly to the named person. It can bypass probate. It may also bypass the trust, even if the trust would have received the account otherwise. The beneficiary line on file with the institution generally controls that account's transfer.

That's why POD and TOD designations are one of the most common silent failures in estate planning. An old POD line set up years ago, never reviewed, can route assets around the trust to someone you didn't intend.

If an account has been retitled into the trust on Day 12, confirm with the institution or your attorney whether the POD or TOD line should be removed. The trust may now handle distribution. If an account is intentionally being kept outside the trust to pass directly to a named person, the POD or TOD line should match that intent.

Either way: audit them every year.

How to Use This Worksheet

For each account or policy:

1. Call the institution or log in to your account.
2. Confirm the beneficiary on file. Don't go from memory. Many readers find a designation they thought was different.
3. Compare what's on file to what you want.
4. Tick "Correct" if it matches. Tick "Update needed" if it doesn't. Tick "Remove" if the account is now in the trust and the POD or TOD line should come off.

5. If an update or removal is required, log the action on Appendix B and complete it within 30 days.

Each category includes a **Date of this audit** field at the top. Fill it in every time you run the audit. The date matters. It's the proof you actually looked.

Digital version. Available at blackhoundbooksllc.com/trust-worksheets. Visit the URL directly. If you'd rather not store this information in the cloud, use the fillable PDF, save it locally, and keep the file with your trust binder.

Worked examples. David's audit at the top of each category shows what a real audit looks like, including one entry where the audit caught a problem. That's the value of doing it.

Retirement Accounts

Date of this audit: _____

Example: David's first annual audit, March 2027

Account: Fidelity 401(k), ending 9911 (matches David's 401(k) in Appendix A)

Primary beneficiary on file currently: Claire Hoffman (100%)

Contingent beneficiary on file currently: None named

Status: ☒ Correct ☐ Update needed

If update needed, what should it read: N/A

Date last verified with institution: March 14, 2027

Notes: Verified by phone with Fidelity rep. This is the account where David's verification pass caught his ex-wife still on file last year. The 2026 fix held. Designation confirmed unchanged.

Account 1

Account: _____

Primary beneficiary on file currently: _____

Contingent beneficiary on file currently: _____

Status: ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed

If update needed, what should it read: _____

Date last verified with institution: _____

Notes: _____

Account 2**Account:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____**Account 3****Account:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____**Account 4****Account:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____

Account 5**Account:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____**Life Insurance****Date of this audit:** _____**Example: David's first annual audit, March 2027****Policy:** Northwestern Mutual term, ending 2266 (matches David's term life policy in Appendix A)**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** Claire Hoffman (100%)**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** None named**Status:** ☒ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** N/A**Date last verified with institution:** March 14, 2027**Notes:** Confirmed online via Northwestern Mutual account portal. Flagged for next year's audit: should add a contingent beneficiary.**Policy 1****Policy:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____

Policy 2**Policy:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____**Policy 3****Policy:** _____**Primary beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Contingent beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed**If update needed, what should it read:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____*Need more entries? Use the digital version.*

POD and TOD Accounts (Bank and Brokerage)

Date of this audit: _____

Example: David's audit catches a problem, March 2027

Account: Keystone Credit Union savings, ending 5503

Account titling: ☒ In trust ☐ Not in trust

POD or TOD beneficiary on file currently: David's ex-wife (full legal name on form)

Status: ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed ☒ Remove (account in trust)

If action required, what: Remove the POD line. The trust now handles distribution.

Date last verified with institution: March 14, 2027

Notes: POD set up in 2014 when David was married. Trust retitling in 2026 didn't automatically clear the POD line. Caught during audit. Logged removal action on Appendix B; visiting branch this week to clear it.

That's the catch this audit exists for. A POD line left over from David's marriage could have routed this entire account to his ex-wife, bypassing his daughter and the trust David spent 21 days building. Fifteen minutes of audit work prevented it.

Account 1

Account: _____

Account titling: ☐ In trust ☐ Not in trust

POD or TOD beneficiary on file currently: _____

Status: ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed ☐ Remove (account in trust)

If action required, what: _____

Date last verified with institution: _____

Notes: _____

Account 2

Account: _____

Account titling: ☐ In trust ☐ Not in trust

POD or TOD beneficiary on file currently: _____

Status: ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed ☐ Remove (account in trust)

If action required, what: _____

Date last verified with institution: _____

Notes: _____

Account 3**Account:** _____**Account titling:** ☐ In trust ☐ Not in trust**POD or TOD beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed ☐ Remove (account in trust)**If action required, what:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____**Account 4****Account:** _____**Account titling:** ☐ In trust ☐ Not in trust**POD or TOD beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed ☐ Remove (account in trust)**If action required, what:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____**Account 5****Account:** _____**Account titling:** ☐ In trust ☐ Not in trust**POD or TOD beneficiary on file currently:** _____**Status:** ☐ Correct ☐ Update needed ☐ Remove (account in trust)**If action required, what:** _____**Date last verified with institution:** _____**Notes:** _____

When the Audit Is Complete

A complete audit has every applicable row filled in, every status ticked, and a date that proves you looked. If any row shows "Update needed" or "Remove," log the action on Appendix B's funding tracker and complete it within 30 days.

This sheet doesn't get filled out once and shelved. Pull it every year on Day 18, and after any Day 19 life-event trigger that changes who you want named: marriage, divorce, birth

or adoption, the death of a beneficiary, an estrangement. Refile it in your trust binder with the date showing.

Fifteen to twenty minutes a year. That's what it costs to make sure the most failure-prone part of the plan actually works.