MERCER ADVISORS™

The Ultimate Guide To

Hiring the Right Financial Advisor

All advisors are not the same. Learn about the differences and why they are important to your decision.

START HERE

Looking for a guide for your financial journey? Start here.

Working with an advisor can bring you closer to achieving your long-term goals and give you back more time to enjoy what's important in your life.
We created this **three-part guide** to help you find the right partner.

Part 1 opens with some of the reasons why you should consider hiring an advisor. From there, we explain key differences between advisors' qualifications, the services they offer, and their cost structures.

In **Part 2,** we compare some of the common investment approaches that advisors follow and talk about the traits that set truly committed advisors apart.

After you've gained some critical knowledge, in **Part 3** you can review our Advisor Interview Checklist to ask the tough questions that will help you make an informed decision.

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Why Hire an Advisor

Securing your financial future is about achieving your life goals. Whatever that vision might be—enjoying a comfortable retirement, funding your children's education, growing your estate to provide for future generations, or just seeing your money yield higher returns—the journey is full of important decisions.

Where should you invest?

When should you make changes in your portfolio? What's your tolerance for risk? How do taxes fit into your strategy? Those are just some of the choices involved in managing wealth over the course of your lifetime. And the more your assets grow, the more factors you may need to consider.

With so much at stake, one of the smartest investments you can make is in hiring an advisor to help you navigate through the complexity and reach your objectives.

Of course, professional guidance costs money – which may initially seem to be at odds with the goal of growing your assets.

But consider what a do-it-yourself approach to wealth management requires:

- **Knowledge and experience.** In this complex and constantly evolving field, there are no shortcuts to acquiring the subject-matter expertise that will help fuel long-term success.
- **Time and attention.** Staying up to date on all the pieces of your financial picture can pull you away from bigger priorities—career, family, hobbies, relaxation—that make your life enjoyable and rewarding.
- **Desire and interest.** If you're not excited by the nuances of financial planning, investing, tax strategy, estate planning, and insurance, how much energy are you likely to give them?
- **Objectivity and accountability.** With your own finances, keeping emotions and behavioral biases in check is difficult—which can lead to impulsive decisions that undermine your long-range financial plan and goals.

A worthy advisor will channel these qualities and capabilities into advancing your wealth management objectives. Beyond giving you greater clarity and confidence, research shows that comprehensive, professional financial advice may yield higher annual net gains—up to 3% above the fees that clients pay on average compared with do-it-yourself investing.[1]

Who Should You Choose?

Added together, the advantages are hard to ignore. But how do you find the partner that's right for you? Let's start by examining the credentials of various advisors and what each one actually means.

[1] Capital Sigma: The Advisor Advantage, Envestnet PMC, 2019; Morningstar; Vanguard Capital Sigma. Figures provided are hypothetical approximations based upon the research conducted and are subject to change. The "alpha" benchmark for these calculations is the MSCI ACWI Index. Please note there is no guarantee working with a financial professional will yield favorable results. All investing involves risk. Future investment performance cannot be guaranteed

Decoding Advisors' Qualifications

Anyone can call themselves a financial advisor. Below the surface, though, all "advisors" are not the same.

Key differences between financial professionals start to emerge when you look at their educational backgrounds and the certifications they have earned. Here are some terms that you should be familiar with.

Certifications

Investment Broker
Also known as registered representatives, brokers must pass qualifying exams to demonstrate competence in whichever areas of the securities industry they want to pursue. Most securities license exams are administered by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) and the North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA). After passing these exams, a broker can then use the title of "advisor." But keep in mind that brokers focus on handling investments, which represent only one part of your wealth management needs.

Investment Advisor Representative
As this title suggests, an investment advisor representative (IAR) typically advises his or her clients on investments and manages their portfolios. In addition to passing the required FINRA exams, individuals must register with either the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or a state securities administrator in order to be considered an IAR. IARs typically focus on investment management to help achieve your wealth goals, including retirement.

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™
Professional To become a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional you must have a bachelor's degree or higher, complete college or university-level coursework that addresses major financial planning areas, and pass a thorough exam administered by the CFP Board of Standards. CFP® professionals are trained in 72 areas of financial expertise and must accrue thousands of hours of experience prior to earning their certification. With this rigorous background, a CFP® professional is qualified to advise clients on a comprehensive range of needs—from investments and retirement planning to tax strategy, estate planning, and trusts.

Standard of Conduct
While you might assume that acting in clients' best interest is a fundamental trait of all financial advisors, the reality is quite different. There are two standards under which different advisors can legally operate.

Suitability Standard
Most brokers or registered representatives operate under the suitability standard, meaning they must do what is suitable for a client—which may not necessarily mean what is in that client's best interest. For example, a broker is allowed to recommend investments that may earn him or her a larger commission, provided that the investment can be considered appropriate for the client's needs. FINRA governs this standard.

Fiduciary Standard Advisors
who are guided by the fiduciary standard of conduct have a legal obligation to do what's in their clients' best interest—in other words, putting the client's needs first. IARs and CFP® professionals are bound to the fiduciary standard, which is governed by the SEC. As part of this obligation, an IAR or CFP must also disclose any conflicts of interest that could impact their recommendations and provide a full description of their fees.

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Decoding Advisors' Qualifications

Anyone can call themselves a financial advisor. Below the surface, though, all "advisors" are not the same.

Tools To Learn About Advisors

- **BrokerCheck:** This online tool lets you research the background and experience of individual brokers and firms that are regulated by FINRA.
- **Investment Adviser Public Disclosure website:** This site provides information about all advisors and firms that are registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Registered representatives of brokerage firms in the BrokerCheck system also appear in the search results.
- **Uniform Application for Investment Adviser Registration (Form ADV):** All firms that are registered with the SEC and manage more than $25 million in assets must complete this form and submit an annual update. Form ADV responses can be viewed on the Investment Adviser Public Disclosure website. You can also ask an advisor to provide their current Form ADV. This will give you a host of information on the firm's office locations, fee structure, services, potential conflicts of interest, and any disciplinary events involving the firm or its employees.

KEY TAKEAWAY

When someone tells you they are a financial advisor, dig deeper—by researching the person's credentials, educational background, experience, and track record—to make sure you choose wisely.

Questions to Ask:

- Are you a fiduciary?
- What is your educational background?
- What credentials or certifications do you hold?
- Do you have any conflicts of interest—such as higher commissions on certain investment products—that could influence your recommendations?

MERCER ADVISORS

WHY HIRE AN ADVISOR

DECODING ADVISORS' QUALIFICATIONS

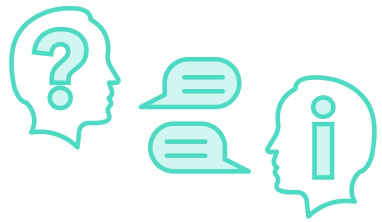
DIFFERENCES IN ADVISORS' SERVICES

UNDERSTANDING ADVISORS' FEES

WHAT'S NEXT

Differences in Advisors' Services

Wealth management goes beyond just investments. You stand to gain higher value from an advisor who understands how all aspects of your financial picture interact in a holistic plan.



Asset manager or wealth manager?

Many advisors talk about investing and wealth management interchangeably, but they are not the same thing. If the conversation merely hovers around stocks, bonds, and other holdings in your portfolio, you're probably dealing with an asset manager rather than a true wealth manager.

Whereas an asset manager typically focuses on a single offering, a wealth manager takes a holistic view of your current financial situation and your long-term objectives. Wealth managers anchor this approach by working with you to create an overall financial plan. From there, a comprehensive wealth manager provides services that address your full spectrum of financial needs.

Here are some of the offerings to look for in a wealth management firm.

Financial planning
Think of financial planning as the GPS for your entire financial journey. Through the process of creating a financial plan together, you and your wealth manager set the baseline for tracking progress toward your goals. The financial plan helps keep you disciplined and accountable when weighing decisions about your household budget, cash flow, investments, estate planning, charitable giving, and more. A holistic wealth manager will also address tax implications and insurance considerations as part of this plan.

Investment management
A wealth manager will help build, manage, and monitor a portfolio of investments that align with your financial plan objectives as well as your personal values and tolerance for risk. Diversified asset allocation and systematic rebalancing should also be part of the wealth manager's approach. (See Part 2 of this Guide for a closer look at the elements of a strong investment approach.)

Tax planning
Taxes make a substantial impact on how much you're able to save toward retirement and other life goals. With a wealth manager who proactively addresses the tax implications of your investments, estate planning, and other financial building blocks, you have greater opportunities to minimize your tax liability.

Estate planning
A comprehensive wealth management approach should include guidance on growing and preserving the assets that you wish to provide for future generations. Ask prospective advisors how they handle estate planning fundamentals such as wills, trusts, charitable giving, and power of attorney for financial and healthcare decisions.

Insurance
You might not think of insurance as an integral part of wealth management, but there's a strong connection between building your assets and protecting them as your needs evolve over a lifetime. With an advisor who understands how to integrate coverage options into your overall financial plan, you'll often find opportunities to lower insurance costs and more easily keep your policies up to date.

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Differences in Advisors' Services

Wealth management goes beyond just investments. You stand to gain higher value from an advisor who understands how all aspects of your financial picture interact in a holistic plan.

KEY TAKEAWAY

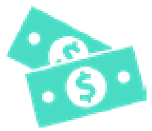
For holistic wealth management guidance that goes beyond just investments, seek out an advisor who can build and implement a comprehensive financial plan. You can also recognize a wealth manager by the services they provide to address taxes, estate planning, insurance, and other broad-based financial needs.

Questions to Ask:

- What services do you provide?
- Do you or your firm give tax advice on my investments and other assets?
- Will you start by creating a detailed financial plan for me and my family?
- Do you and your firm give estate planning advice? Do you implement estate planning documents, including wills and trusts?
- Can you provide guidance on insurance in relation to my assets and financial plan?

Understanding Advisors' Fees

When paying for financial advice, you should feel comfortable with the terms and confident that you're receiving a high value in return.



Advisors charge for their services in a variety of ways, so comparing different fees or commissions can be tricky.

Nonetheless, you should expect any prospective advisor to be upfront and transparent about their cost structure. That includes disclosing what services are covered under an advisory fee. Advisors should also tell you whether they receive a commission—and how much—on certain products or services.

As we discussed in the previous section on credentials, not all advisors are legally bound to act in a client's best interest. Someone who works under the suitability standard and on commission may have a conflict of interest if they are dealing with more than one product.

Here are some of the costs you're likely to encounter when talking with prospective advisors.

Commissions
Trade commissions or transaction charges are typically linked to a product. You may pay this fee when you buy or sell stocks, bonds, and other investments.

Custodial fees
Brokerages and other financial institutions may charge you a custodial fee to hold and maintain the stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other investment products in your account. Custodians collect any dividends and interest income from your holdings, provide account statements, and carry out other administrative tasks.

Expense ratios
Expense ratios represent the cost of running a mutual fund or exchange-traded fund. These fees are charged back to the shareholders. The higher the operating expenses, the smaller the investors' returns. Ask the advisor about the average expense ratios for the different asset classes that are being recommended to you as part of your investment portfolio.

Transaction charges
Transaction charges may show up when you buy or sell funds or stocks. The costs can vary depending on which broker you use. Mutual funds sometimes pay the brokerage to offer their funds without a transaction charge, but this cost may then show up in the form of a higher expense ratio.

Surrender charge
You might pay this when you sell, cash in, or cancel insurance policies, annuities, or certain types of investments.

Management fees
Most wealth managers charge a flat fee—typically about 1%—based on how much money they manage for you. Under this "fee-only" arrangement, the advisor or firm only earns more money if you do. However, financial advisors who work under a "fee-based" model may also earn commissions on the products they sell. Since IARs and CFP® professionals adhere to the fiduciary standard—always putting clients' interests first—a fee-only structure reinforces the objectivity they bring to the table.

Cost vs. value of services
It's important to understand the total cost you pay for the services or value you receive. Some wealth managers will look at the cumulative costs and negotiate to get you more for what you pay. For example, a wealth management firm that has offices in several states and operates across the country might be able to negotiate with their vendors to bring down operational costs so that you're getting lower expense ratios and custodial fees. Or there may be other wealth management firms that have broader service offerings compared to other firms, so fees can factor in that way as well.

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Understanding Advisors' Fees

When paying for financial advice, you should feel comfortable with the terms and confident that you're receiving a high value in return.

KEY TAKEAWAY

It's critical that you understand how an advisor is compensated because this is one of the clearest ways you can tell whether your interests will always come first. Ideally, you want to be able to compare fees across all firms at a base level. But going a step further, you'll also want to consider the total fees against all the services you'll receive.

Questions to Ask:

- What is your firm's business model or cost structure? (Fee-based, fee-only, commission-based, transaction charges)
- How do you get paid? (Salary, bonus, commission, other fees)
- Do you offer proprietary investment vehicles?
- What are the average product costs (i.e., the expense ratios) of the investments you recommend?
- What are the transaction fees for buying or selling an investment?
- Do you offer products that come with surrender charges?
- Will you provide a written agreement outlining your services and related charges or fees?

MERCER ADVISORS

What's Next!

The details we've covered so far about differences in advisors' credentials, services, and costs will get you started on your search—but there's more. In Part 2 of this guide, we compare some of the common investment approaches that advisors follow, and we'll talk about the traits that set truly committed advisors apart.

READ PART 2 OF THE GUIDE

MERCER ADVISORS™

The Ultimate Guide To

Hiring the Right Financial Advisor

Part 2: Learn about Different Investment Approaches.
Learn more about the various investing approaches advisors use and the essential components of building a trusted relationship.

START HERE

Add to your toolkit when choosing the right advisor.

Part 1 of our guide, we highlighted the value of hiring an advisor, explored key differences between advisors' qualifications, and broke down how advisors get paid for the services they provide.

In Part 2, we compare some of the common investment approaches that advisors follow and talk about the traits that set truly committed advisors apart.

In Part 3, you can review our Advisor Interview Checklist to ask the tough questions that will help you make an informed decision.

MERCER ADVISORS™

Comparing Investment Approaches

Ultimately, an advisor's mission is to help you achieve the long-term financial returns that will support your life goals. Make sure you understand the thinking behind your advisor's recommendations on how to invest.

As we discussed in Part 1 of this guide, your financial plan serves as the GPS for your financial journey. Similarly, the components of an investment approach are like the moving parts of a vehicle that you and your advisor assemble to carry you toward your destination.

Every advisor you meet is likely to recommend a slightly different blueprint and maintenance plan for your investments. Here are some key features to evaluate when checking under the hood.

Sources of input
Find out what resources a prospective advisor will consult when putting together an overall investment approach. Some advisors choose their preferred mix of funds independently. Others, particularly at larger firms, take guidance from an investment committee composed of senior-level professionals. This approach helps incorporate multiple viewpoints on investment research, policies, portfolios, and fund management decisions.

Methodologies
While all investment approaches are subject to uncertainty, advisors earn their fees and their clients' confidence based on how well they determine where and when to invest for above-average return potential. Let's examine three primary schools of thought.

- **Active investing:** In this methodology, a portfolio manager makes frequent buy-and-sell decisions based on his or her assessment of how various investment options are performing relative to each other. In general, an active manager's goal is to "beat the market." Although the premise of active investing would seem to make sense, most active managers routinely fall short of that goal. For example, a 2019 study showed that after deducting the fees or commissions that they charge, 97% of active managers investing in U.S. large-cap stocks failed to outperform a passive benchmark over the period of 2010-2019.[1]
- **Index investing:** Sometimes referred to as passive investing, this approach seeks to match the performance of a given market index (such as the Dow Jones or S&P 500) by investing in a broad portfolio of assets that make up the index. Generally, the fees charged by an index investing manager are low. However, you might be missing opportunities to capture higher returns with a passive approach.
- **Factor investing:** Factor investing is a strategy used to invest in companies that exhibit certain characteristics, which have been shown through academic research to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns over time. Factors like size, quality, momentum, value, and volatility are used to determine which investments offer higher expected returns in a well-diversified portfolio.Decades of academic research indicate that building portfolios with the factor-based approach can lead to higher risk-adjusted returns over time compared with active management, market timing, and traditional index investing.

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[1] S&P Dow, "SPIVA US Year-End 2019 Scorecard: Active Funds Continue to Lag," https://www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/articles/spiva-u-s-year-end-2019-scorecard-active-funds-continued-to-lag. Past performance is not a guarantee of future results.

Comparing Investment Approaches

Ultimately, an advisor's mission is to help you achieve the long-term financial returns that will support your life goals. Make sure you understand the thinking behind your advisor's recommendations on how to invest.

Asset allocation
Asset allocation is the process of determining which mix of assets to hold in your portfolio. It considers your financial goals, how much risk you're able to handle, and how much time you have to achieve your objectives. Your asset allocation may change depending on changes in your life.

Diversification
Choosing a diverse mix of investments—both among and within different types of stocks, bonds, and other assets—is a key to achieving long-term success. Diversification helps smooth out the peaks and valleys of the market so that over time, you stay on track.

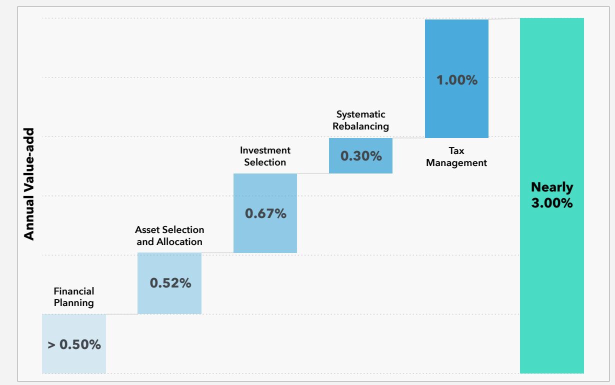
Rebalancing
Once you build a diversified portfolio, you need to check on your progress and adjust to changes in market conditions. Through systematic rebalancing, you sell outperforming assets and use the proceeds to buy underperforming assets. Rebalancing helps to remove the emotion out of the investing process.

Consideration of risk
All investments carry some degree of risk. The advisor's job is to help you achieve the highest return possible at the lowest level of risk.Look for someone who is open to discussing how comfortable you are with risk. And remember: there is no right or wrong answer. A good advisor will work with you to reach the appropriate balance in relation to your financial goals.

Values-based investing
You should be able to freely select investments that reflect your personal beliefs and values, such as shares in companies that practice environmental responsibility or promote social justice. Conversely, you may want to guard against investing in companies whose products or services conflict with your values. Ideally, a prospective advisor will be eager to learn about your values-based investing objectives and offer you options for shaping a portfolio along those lines.

How Professional Advice Can Pay Off

Research confirms that the benefits of professional wealth management guidance typically outweigh the fees that clients pay—by as much as 3% in annual value added.



The figure provided for Investment Selection refers to active management investment selection. The figure for passive management investment selection is 0.61%. Figures provided are hypothetical approximations based upon the research conducted and are subject to change. The "alpha" benchmark for these calculations is the MSCI ACWI Index. Please note there is no guarantee working with a financial professional will yield favorable results. All investing involves risk. Future investment performance cannot be guaranteed.

Learn more about the bottom-line value of an advisor.

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Comparing Investment Approaches

Ultimately, an advisor's mission is to help you achieve the long-term financial returns that will support your life goals. Make sure you understand the thinking behind your advisor's recommendations on how to invest.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Before putting your assets and trust in the hands of an advisor, find out how they think about investing. Advisors should be able to clearly explain their research methods as well as their approach to asset allocation, diversification, rebalancing, and risk when managing your portfolio. Your beliefs and values should also be factored into the advisor's recommendations.

Questions to Ask:

- What is your investment management approach—and why do you follow that approach?
- How do you evaluate the success of your investment approach?
- How do you select specific investments and make other investment decisions?
- Will you manage my portfolio on your own, or does your firm have an investment committee that determines the strategy?
- How will you advise me on managing risk in my investment portfolio?
- How do you determine my asset allocation?
- What is your approach to diversification?
- How often do you recommend rebalancing my portfolio?
- Do you take custody of my assets?

MERCER ADVISORS

How Advisors Work with Their Clients

When you hire a financial advisor, you're building a relationship that is personal as well as professional. Communication, trust, and compatibility matter.

Most conversations about money involve much more than just numbers on a balance sheet. Strong emotions and deeply held beliefs also come into play. An advisor needs to understand the factors that influence your financial planning goals—which will be difficult unless you feel comfortable opening up to that person.

Only you can tell for certain when the connection clicks, and why. But the following considerations may help you get attuned to what's most important in your relationship with an advisor.

Where they focus
Some advisors wear several different "hats"—sales, marketing, legal compliance, billing—routinely diverting them from client service. This kind of multitasking may cause your relationship to get switched on autopilot. Instead, consider holding out for an advisor whose firm has other employees dedicated to sales and administrative tasks—so he or she can stay focused on meeting your financial needs.

Who else is there for you
Ask prospective advisors about their support network. Can they bring in other specialists to help answer questions and fulfill needs—such as tax strategy, estate planning, or insurance options—outside of their core knowledge area? You might feel more confident and at ease working with a firm that uses this type of team-based approach.

How they measure success
This is where an advisor's attention to "who you are"—your values, personality, communication style, and more—becomes apparent. If they jump straight into talking about annualized portfolio growth, stock picks, or "beating the market," you might not have much room to build a meaningful relationship. Wealth managers tend to measure success in terms of making progress toward your life goals rather than based on day-to-day investment returns.

How often they reach out
While you might not require a daily progress report, you probably would like to know that your advisor is thinking about your financial situation more than just one or twice a year. Ask prospective advisors how they plan to communicate with you and what topics they consider most important to discuss regularly. The advisor should also be interested in whether you prefer talking in person, by phone, in a video conference, or by text. Some advisory firms take client outreach even further—offering webinars, newsletters, and online access to other knowledge resources.

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When you hire a financial advisor, you're building a relationship that is personal as well as professional. Communication, trust, and compatibility matter.

Your advisor should:

- Get to know you and your needs. The advisor cares about your well-being and financial success.
- Inspire and empower you. This starts with creating a written financial plan that addresses your comprehensive wealth management objectives as mentioned in Part 1 of this Guide.
- Educate you about how to achieve your financial goals. A good advisor will explain how and why your financial plan is set up the way it is, and how those elements work together to help you succeed.
- Keep you accountable. They motivate you to stay on course when you want to sell everything, panic that the markets are crashing, or are otherwise tempted to react emotionally.
- Communicate and listen well. A good advisor will make clear recommendations, reinforce shared goals, celebrate your wins, and be there during difficult times.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Look for an advisor whose first and biggest interest is in getting to know you—rather than trying to sell you on what's great about them. The best advisors coach their clients to make investment choices based on evidence instead of emotion, and to stay disciplined about their long-range financial plan. They should be able articulate what a successful relationship looks like and how it works—with specific recommendations, and in a way that you can understand. Your beliefs and values should also be factored into the advisor's recommendations.

Questions to Ask:

- What other responsibilities do you handle in addition to advising clients like me?
- Are you tasked with sales and marketing for your firm?
- How much time do you spend working with clients vs. handling other responsibilities?
- How often can I expect to hear from you?
- Who will work with me? [Is it just one person or a team? Who will be my primary point of contact?]
- How long have you been at this firm?
- How big is the firm?
- How will you keep me up to date on my progress and results?

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Put Your Knowledge into Action

We're Ready for Tough Questions

At Mercer Advisors, we welcome current and prospective clients to compare us side-by-side with other firms. Your financial goals are too valuable and important to be taken lightly, so before you choose an advisor, take a look at what we have to offer.

If you missed Part 1 of this guide, click here to download it now!

There are more than 263,000 financial advisors in the United States –but huge differences between these individuals' qualifications, services, fees, investment approaches, and working relationships with clients. When you interview with advisors, be sure to look below the surface to ensure they are equipped to offer a comprehensive wealth management approach that's built around your own personalized financial plan.

Revisit the information and questions in this two-part guide as you research various financial services firms and professionals. We have also compiled a full checklist of topics to discuss when you meet face-to-face with potential advisors.

GET THE CHECKLIST

[2] Bureau of Labor Statistics: https://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/personal-financial-advisors.htm.

MERCER ADVISORS

Mercer Advisors: How We Stack Up

Freedom to enjoy, freedom from anxiety, freedom to give back. The confidence knowing your lifetime journey is on a path for success—this is what a holistic wealth management plan can do for you. Mercer Advisors is a full-service wealth management firm founded more than 35 years ago on a mission to help our clients achieve financial independence.

Our Qualifications

- A majority of our advisors hold the CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ certification—earned through rigorous training in 72 areas of expertise and thousands of hours of practical experience.
- We operate under the **fiduciary standard of conduct**—a legal obligation to put each individual client's needs first at all times.

Our Services

- We start by working with you on an overall financial plan that links your current financial situation—including cash flow and budget considerations—with your long-term financial objectives.
- As a comprehensive wealth management firm, we provide services that **address your full spectrum of financial needs:**

  Financial planning

  Investment management

  Tax planning and preparation

  Estate planning

  Insurance

  Corporate trustee

- We have **in-house CPAs, attorneys, and other specialists** who support your advisor in delivering personalized guidance to you.

Our Cost Structure

- We operate as a fee-only firm—which means no hidden commissions or charges.
- You can see upfront what we collect for our services.

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MERCER ADVISORS

Mercer Advisors: How We Stack Up

Freedom to enjoy, freedom from anxiety, freedom to give back. The confidence knowing your lifetime journey is on a path for success—this is what a holistic wealth management plan can do for you. Mercer Advisors is a full-service wealth management firm founded more than 35 years ago on a mission to help our clients achieve financial independence.

Our Investment Approach

- We have a 26-member investment committee that oversees our investment research, policies, portfolios, and managers.
- Our firm takes a factor-based investing approach—grounded in decades of academic research—in which we assess factors such as company size, quality, momentum, value, and volatility to determine which investments can offer higher expected returns in a well-diversified portfolio.
- We build investment portfolios for our clients with attention to asset allocation, broad diversification, systematic rebalancing, and individual risk tolerance.
- Many of our investment strategies can be customized using values-specific screens, allowing you to conscientiously shape your portfolio.
- We work with qualified clients to understand the impact of different private investments on their portfolios.

Our Client Relationships

- Our advisors focus nearly 100% of their time and attention on serving clients—not sales, marketing, or billing.
- As part of building and maintaining your customized financial plan, our advisors seek out what's important to you—so they can offer guidance tailored to your unique values, goals, and needs.
- We define success as moving you closer to your goals and empowering you to achieve your personal vision of financial independence.
- We combine the personal service and accessibility of locally based advisors with the strength of a sophisticated national network.

Talk with us

Schedule a complimentary financial projection consultation with one of our advisors. Tell us about your current assets and your objective for retirement, college tuition, or other monetary need. We'll provide real-time analysis of potential gaps in your approach, a follow-up projection, and suggestions to help your plans stay on track.

SPEAK WITH AN ADVISOR

Call us at 888.565.1681
Visit merceradvisors.com

MERCER ADVISORS™

The Ultimate Guide To

Hiring the Right Financial Advisor

Part 3: Advisor Interview Checklist

Advisor Interview Checklist

Great job! You've gained some critical knowledge from our **Ultimate Guide to Hiring the Right Financial Advisor.** Now, you're ready to ask the tough questions that will help you make an informed decision.

Use this checklist when you have face-to-face meetings with potential advisors. We suggest that you write down their answers and your initial impressions so you can think more about them later and compare different advisors side by side.

1) Qualifications

- ☐ Are you a fiduciary?
- ☐ What is your educational background?
- ☐ What credentials or certifications do you hold?
- ☐ Do you have any conflicts of interest—such as higher commissions on certain investment products—that could influence your recommendations?

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QUALIFICATIONS

SERVICE OFFERINGS

UNDERSTANDING
ADVISORS' FEES

INVESTMENT
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WORKING
WITH CLIENTS

2) Service Offerings

- ☐ What services do you provide?
- ☐ Do you or your firm give tax advice on my investments and other assets?
- ☐ Will you start by creating a detailed financial plan for me and my family?
- ☐ Do you and your firm give estate planning advice?
- ☐ Do you implement estate planning documents, including wills and trusts?
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QUALIFICATIONS

SERVICE OFFERINGS

UNDERSTANDING ADVISORS' FEES

INVESTMENT APPROACH

WORKING WITH CLIENTS

3) Understanding Advisors' Fees

- ☐ What is your firm's business model or cost structure? (Fee-based, fee-only, commission-based, transaction charges)
- ☐ How do you get paid? (Salary, bonus, commission, other fees)
- ☐ Do you offer proprietary investment vehicles?
- ☐ What are the average product costs (i.e., the expense ratios) of the investments you recommend?
- ☐ What are the transaction fees for buying or selling an investment?
- ☐ Do you offer products that come with surrender charges?
- ☐ Will you provide a written agreement outlining your services and related charges or fees?

NOTES

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4) Investment Approach

- ☐ What is your investment management approach – and why do you follow that approach?
- ☐ How do you evaluate the success of your investment approach?
- ☐ How do you select specific investments and make other investment decisions?
- ☐ Will you manage my portfolio on your own, or does your firm have an investment committee that determines the strategy?
- ☐ How will you advise me on managing risk in my investment portfolio?
- ☐ How do you determine my asset allocation?
- ☐ What is your approach to diversification?
- ☐ How often do you recommend rebalancing my portfolio?
- ☐ Do you take custody of my assets?

NOTES

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5) Working With Clients

- ☐ What other responsibilities do you handle in addition to advising clients like me?
- ☐ Are you tasked with sales and marketing for your firm?
- ☐ How much time do you spend working with clients vs. handling other responsibilities?
- ☐ How often can I expect to hear from you?
- ☐ Who will work with me? [Is it just one person or a team? Who will be my primary point of contact?]
- ☐ How long have you been at this firm?
- ☐ How big is the firm?
- ☐ How will you keep me up to date on my progress and results?

NOTES

MERCER ADVISORS™

Ask Us the Tough Questions

At Mercer Advisors, we want you to ask us these tough questions—and compare how we stack up with other firms. Our advisors and other specialists take the time to understand what's important to you. Then we provide a breadth of guidance—tailored to your unique values, goals and needs. With these tools and your input, we can design a comprehensive wealth management plan to help you achieve your vision of financial independence.

SPEAK WITH AN ADVISOR

If you would like more detailed information on what you should look for in an advisor, please download Part 1 and 2 of this guide here.

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