



PA Estate vs. Trust Administration — Step by Step Comparison

Step	Probate Estate (Will)	Revocable Trust (Post-Death)
Initial Authority	Wait for death certificate then file will with Register of Wills; obtain Letters Testamentary to act as executor.	Wait for death certificate then Successor trustee acts immediately (no court appointment needed); however, financial institutions typically have their legal department review terms of trust and usually charge the Trustee to review. Depending on the banking and financial institutions it may take several weeks to review Trust and agree to Trustee proceeding.
Court Involvement	Estate is administered according to the established clear laws of Pennsylvania.	Trust is required to be administered according to the laws of Pennsylvania but no supervision from the courts to monitor legal administration.
Required Notices	Must give formal notice to heirs and beneficiaries under established probate rules.	Must send statutory trust notice within 30 days to spouse, children, beneficiaries, etc.
Public vs. Private	Estate filings (will, inventory) become public record.	PA inheritance tax filing becomes public record.
Asset Control	Executor identifies and gathers assets titled in decedent's name.	Trustee can only control assets titled in the trust; if any assets are in decedent's name and not in the name of the trust, which frequently occurs, probate is required for those assets.
Inventory of Assets	Must file inventory with the court.	Internal Inventory of assets needed with no supervision.
Creditor Process	Must advertise estate and allow time for creditor claims.	Must advertise trust administration and allow for creditor claims- Trusts do not avoid the reach of creditors.
Tax Filings (PA Focus)	File PA inheritance tax return and federal returns.	Same requirement: PA inheritance tax still applies.
Waiting Period	Wait for inheritance tax.	Same wait for inheritance tax clearance (same bottleneck).



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Ongoing Reporting	Accounting provided to beneficiaries.	Accounting provided to beneficiaries with no court supervision to ensure it is completed.
Distributions	Executor distributes per will.	Trustee required to distribute per trust with no court supervision- if Trustee does not follow the Trust, beneficiaries of Trust must retain attorney to file Court actions.
Closing Process	File Status Report.	No formal closing filing needed with court; administration ends when trust terms satisfied.
Timeline Reality in PA	Often 6-12+ months (tax clearance drives timing).	Often 6-12+ months (tax clearance drives timing).
Cost Structure	Similar depending on complexity of the estate.	After death, similar depending on the complexity of the trust- initial fees to create the Trust can cost 5-10 times the cost of creating a Will package.

