

The Sasaki's Learn Risks of Online Legal Forms: An International Estate Planning Example

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September 04, 2011

This fictional example is drawn from our guide [Buying U.S. Real Estate When Your Child Studies in America](#).

Hiro Sasaki, 19, will be a freshman at Stanford this fall (Class of 2015). Hiro's parents, Emiko and Dai Sasaki of Tokyo, are looking to purchase a place for Hiro to live. They want to do everything they can to help him succeed, and that means providing a study environment free of the distractions common in a dormitory.

\$675,000 cash for Palo Alto townhouse

The Sasaki's identify a townhouse in Palo Alto listed for \$675,000. It's close enough for Hiro to bike to campus. Dai pays the listing price in cash, putting the title in his name.

Dai reads online about the importance of having a [revocable living trust](#) in the U.S. Dai has seen those online legal programs where it is possible to purchase do-it-yourself-forms. To Dai it seems like a good option. He uses a do-it-yourself form to establish the trust.

Establishing trust does not lower Sasaki's tax liability

Unfortunately, while a revocable living trust is useful for [avoiding probate](#), it does not [lower his tax liability](#). Dai still has only a \$60,000 exemption. So if something happened to Dai, his family will have a massive estate tax bill – in the neighborhood of **\$142,800**.

The online legal program where Dai purchased his form wouldn't "know" about the unique circumstances he is in. And despite diligently completing the form he downloaded, he is about where he started off with respect to his tax liability.



A stack of forms can't "know" the nuances of your situation. Work with an attorney experienced in international estate planning to craft a plan that fits your unique circumstances. Protect your loved ones and assets by [examining your options now](#) »

A minor car accident in Tokyo gets Dai thinking again. He realizes he has not protected his loved ones from a big tax bill, should anything happen. He finds a [Bay Area attorney experienced in international estate planning](#), and gets a sound plan in place.

Takeaway

This example is made up, but it's true that a stack of forms can't "know" the nuances of your situation. If your situation is anything like the one described here, consider working with an attorney experienced in [international estate planning](#) to craft a plan that fits your unique circumstances.