



Farmers Trust Company

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More Money, More Problems

With financial market participants focused on every turn of the trade negotiations between the U.S. and China, the Federal Reserve (Fed) has initiated a new monetary program of \$60 billion per month in Treasury bill purchases. While they are not explicitly calling this a new round of “quantitative easing”, make no mistake, that’s exactly what it is. The key takeaway here is that global central banks, including the U.S. Fed, will do whatever it takes to keep financial markets floating on a deep and liquid ocean of money. While this may indeed keep stock prices from falling too much, the more important implication is that some building inflationary pressures are almost unavoidable.

Whether or not a favorable trade deal with China is reached, and we do believe some type of deal will ultimately be accomplished, the much bigger issues of debt, deficits, and slowing economic growth are putting policy-makers into a corner. With limited means of addressing the various economic issues we face, the most politically feasible option continues to be monetary stimulus from central banks. Up until now, this has caused very little inflationary pressure in the global economy despite strong warnings from some market analysts. In fact, large debt burdens have exerted deflationary pressures that our monetary overlords have been impotent to reverse. That is likely to change going forward as more radical policies like Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) are enacted in order to attempt to stimulate economies where traditional quantitative easing has failed to produce the desired effect. While these changes are likely to begin slowly and move in fits and starts, this could very well turn into a major investment theme over the next three to five years. It is no coincidence that now that inflation is at the bottom of most investors’ list of worries, it is more likely to become the biggest risk factor going forward.

This transition to a more inflationary environment is likely to cause a shift in the character of the market, as recent winning sectors like Consumer Staples are pinched by rising input cost pressures while recent losing sectors like Energy start to catch a bid. We may begin to see rising prices across the commodity complex, which is a segment of the market that has been plagued in a bear market for more than a decade. It is unclear whether interest rates will be able to move significantly higher, as would be expected if inflation begins to rise. The problem with higher rates is that they could quickly choke off the very economic growth central banks are trying to create. What is more likely is that real (inflation adjusted) interest rates will move even further into negative territory as nominal rates stay artificially pinned at very low levels. This could make Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities (TIPS) an attractive investment option for fixed income investors.

Farmers Trust Company October 2019 Newsletter

Five Times in Your Life When You Might Need Help with Your Finances

Balancing 401(k) and HSA Contributions

What health services aren't covered by Medicare?

How much will health care cost?





Five Times in Your Life When You Might Need Help with Your Finances



The cost and availability of life insurance depend on factors such as age, health, and the type and amount of insurance purchased.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there can be no assurance that any investment strategy will be successful.

Taxable distributions from retirement plans and IRAs prior to age 59½ may be subject to a 10% penalty tax unless an exception applies.

Disability premiums are based on your age, gender, occupation, and the amount of potential lost income you are trying to protect, as well as the specifics of the policy and what additional benefits are added.

As you move through different stages of life, you will face new and unique financial situations. Did you just get engaged? Perhaps you are wondering how you and your partner are going to manage your money together. Do you have children? Maybe you are looking for ways to pay for their college education.

When you navigate through these various life events, you might seek professional guidance to help you make sound financial choices.

1. Getting married

Getting married is an exciting time in one's life, but it also brings about many challenges. One challenge that you and your spouse will face is how to merge your finances. Careful planning and communication are important, since the financial decisions you make now can have a lasting impact on your future.

You'll want to discuss your financial goals and determine which are most important to both of you. You should also prepare a budget to make sure you are spending less than you earn. Other issues to consider as a couple include combining financial accounts, integrating insurance coverage, and increasing retirement plan contributions.

2. Buying a home

Buying a home can be stressful, especially for first-time homebuyers. Since most people finance their home purchases, buying a house usually means getting a mortgage. As a result, you'll need to determine how large a mortgage you can afford by taking into account your gross monthly income, housing expenses, and long-term debt.

And if you haven't already done so, you'll need to save for a down payment. Traditionally, lenders have required a 20% down payment on the purchase of a home, however many lenders now offer loans with lower down payments.

3. Starting a family

Starting a family is an important — and expensive — commitment. As your family grows, you will likely need to reassess and make changes to your budget. Many of your living expenses will increase (e.g., grocery, health-care, and housing costs). In addition, you'll need to account for new expenses such as child care and building a college fund.

Having a family also means you should review your insurance coverage needs. Life insurance can help protect your family from financial uncertainty if you die, while disability insurance will help replace your income if you become injured or sick.

4. Paying for college

Paying for college is a major financial undertaking and usually involves a combination of strategies to help cover costs — savings, financial aid, income during the college years, and potentially other creative cost-cutting measures. Hopefully, you've been saving money on a regular basis to amass a healthy sum when your child is ready for college. But as college costs continue to rise each year, what you've saved may not be enough.

For this reason, many families supplement their savings at college time with federal or college financial aid. Federal aid can include student and parent loans (need-based and non-need-based), grants and work-study (both need-based), while college aid consists primarily of grants and scholarships (need-based and merit-based). In fact, college grants and scholarships can make up a significant portion of the college funding puzzle, so exploring the availability of college aid is probably the single biggest thing you can do after saving regularly to optimize your bottom line. In addition to financial aid, you might take out a private college loan or borrow against your home equity. Or you might pay college expenses using your current income or other savings or investments.

5. Saving for retirement

You know that saving for retirement is important. However, sometimes it's easy to delay saving while you're still young and retirement seems too far off in the future. Proper planning is important, and the sooner you get started, the easier it will be to meet your retirement income needs. Depending on your desired retirement lifestyle, experts suggest that you may need 80% to 100% of your pre-retirement income to maintain your standard of living. However, this is only a general guideline. To determine your specific needs, you'll need to estimate all your potential sources of retirement income and retirement expenses, taking taxes and inflation into account.

Once you've estimated how much money you'll need for retirement, your next goal is to save that amount. Employer-sponsored retirement plans like 401(k)s and 403(b)s are powerful savings tools because you can make pre-tax contributions (reducing your current taxable income), and any investment earnings grow tax deferred until withdrawn, when they are taxed as ordinary income. You may be able to enhance your savings even more if your employer matches contributions. IRAs also offer tax-deferred growth of earnings.





Balancing 401(k) and HSA Contributions



For more information on qualified medical expenses, review IRS Publication 502. For help with your specific situation, consult a tax professional.

Asset allocation is a method used to help manage investment risk; it does not guarantee a profit or protect against investment loss.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.

¹ Survey of Adults with Employer-Sponsored Insurance, Kaiser Family Foundation/LA Times, May 2, 2019

² 2019 HSA Survey, Plan Sponsor Council of America, June 4, 2019

If you have the opportunity to contribute to both a 401(k) and a health savings account (HSA), you may wonder how best to take advantage of them. Determining how much to contribute to each type of plan will require some careful thought and strategic planning.

Understand the tax benefits

A traditional, non-Roth 401(k) allows you to save for retirement on a pre-tax basis, which means the money is deducted from your paycheck before taxes are assessed. The account then grows on a tax-deferred basis; you don't pay taxes on any contributions or earnings until you withdraw the money. Withdrawals are subject to ordinary income tax and a possible 10% penalty tax if made before you reach age 59½, unless an exception applies.

You can open and contribute to an HSA only if you are enrolled in a qualifying high-deductible health plan (HDHP), are not covered by someone else's plan, and cannot be claimed as a dependent by someone else. Although HDHP premiums are generally lower than other types of health insurance, the out-of-pocket costs could be much higher (until you reach the deductible). That's where HSAs come in. Similar to 401(k)s, they allow you to set aside money on a pre-tax or tax-deductible basis, and the money grows tax deferred.

However, HSAs offer an extra tax advantage: Funds used to pay qualified medical expenses can be withdrawn from the account *tax-free*. And you don't have to wait until a certain age to do so. That may be one reason why 68% of individuals in one survey viewed HSAs as a way to pay current medical bills rather than save for the future.¹ However, a closer look at HSAs reveals why they can add a new dimension to your retirement strategy.

HSAs: A deeper dive

Following are some of the reasons an HSA could be a good long-term, asset-building tool.

- With an HSA, there is no "use it or lose it" requirement, as there is with a flexible spending account (FSA); you can carry an HSA balance from one year to the next, allowing it to potentially grow over time.
- HSAs are portable. If you leave your employer for any reason, you can roll the money into another HSA.
- You typically have the opportunity to invest your HSA money in a variety of asset classes, similar to a 401(k) plan. (According to the Plan Sponsor Council of America, most HSAs require you to have at least \$1,000 in

the account before you can invest beyond cash alternatives.²)

- HSAs don't impose required minimum distributions at age 70½, unlike 401(k)s.
- You can use your HSA money to pay for certain health insurance costs in retirement, including Medicare premiums and copays, as well as long-term care insurance premiums (subject to certain limits).
- Prior to age 65, withdrawals used for nonqualified expenses are subject to income tax and a 20% penalty tax; however, after age 65, money used for nonqualified expenses will not be subject to the penalty [i.e., HSA dollars used for nonqualified expenses after age 65 receive the same tax treatment as traditional 401(k) withdrawals].

The bottom line is that if you don't need all of your HSA money to cover immediate health-care costs, it may provide an ideal opportunity to build a separate nest egg for your retirement health-care expenses. (It might be wise to keep any money needed to cover immediate or short-term medical expenses in relatively conservative investments.)

Additional points to consider

If you have the option to save in both a 401(k) and an HSA, ideally you would set aside the maximum amount in each type of account: in 2019, the limits are \$19,000 (plus an additional \$6,000 if you're 50 or older) in your 401(k) plan; \$3,500 for individual coverage (or \$7,000 for families, plus an additional \$1,000 if you're 55 or older) in your HSA. Realistically, however, those amounts may be unattainable. So here are some important points to consider.

- 1) Estimate how much you spend out of pocket on your family's health care annually and set aside at least that much in your HSA.
- 2) If either your 401(k) or HSA — or both — offers an employer match, try to contribute at least enough to take full advantage of it. Not doing so is turning down free money.
- 3) Understand all HSA rules, both now and down the road. For example, you'll need to save receipts for all your medical expenses. And once you're enrolled in Medicare, you can no longer contribute to an HSA. Nor can you pay Medigap premiums with HSA dollars.
- 4) Compare investment options in both types of accounts. Examine the objectives, risk/return potential, and fees and expenses of all options before determining amounts to invest.
- 5) If your 401(k) offers a Roth account, you may want to factor its pros and cons into the equation as well.



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What health services aren't covered by Medicare?

Original Medicare — Part A hospital insurance and Part B medical insurance — offers broad coverage, but many services are not covered.

Some may be fully or partially covered by a Part C Medicare Advantage Plan, which replaces Original Medicare, or a Medigap policy, which supplements Original Medicare. Both are offered by Medicare-approved private insurers. (You cannot have both a Medicare Advantage Plan and a Medigap policy.)

Whether you are looking forward to Medicare in the future or are already enrolled, you should consider these potential expenses.

Deductibles, copays, and coinsurance.

Costs for covered services can add up, and — unlike most private insurance — there is no annual out-of-pocket maximum. Medicare Advantage and Medigap plans may pay all or a percentage of these costs and may include an out-of-pocket maximum.

Prescription drugs. For coverage, you need to enroll in a Part D prescription drug plan or a Medicare Advantage plan that includes drug coverage.

Dental and vision care. Original Medicare does not cover routine dental or vision care. Some Medicare Advantage and Medigap plans may offer coverage for either or both of these needs. You might also consider private dental and/or vision insurance.

Hearing care and hearing aids. Some Medicare Advantage plans may cover hearing aids and exams.

Medical care outside the United States.

Original Medicare does not offer coverage outside the United States. Some Medicare Advantage and Medigap plans offer coverage for emergency care abroad. You can also purchase a private travel insurance policy.

Long-term care. Medicare does not cover "custodial care" in a nursing home or home health care. You may be able to purchase long-term care (LTC) insurance from private insurers.

A complete statement of coverage, including exclusions, exceptions, and limitations, is found only in the LTC insurance policy. It should be noted that LTC insurance carriers have the discretion to raise their rates and remove their products from the marketplace.

How much will health care cost?

Retirement health-care costs will vary depending on your health and longevity, but it may help to have a guideline. These are the estimated savings required for an individual or couple who turned 65 in 2019 to have a 90% chance of meeting expenses for Medicare Part B health insurance, Part D prescription drug coverage, Medigap Plan F, and out-of-pocket drug costs, assuming median prescription drug expenses.* These estimates do not include services not covered by Medicare or Medigap.



*Medigap Plan F is used for these estimates because it is the most comprehensive coverage available and simplifies the calculation. However, this plan may not be available for new beneficiaries after January 1, 2020. Current enrollees may keep Plan F, and most other plans will remain available for new enrollees.

Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2019

