

Finding a Fee-Only Advisor, Consumer Tips & Tools

By Bevin Callan, Senior Manager, Membership Services, NAPFA Staff
www.NAPFA.org

Here's a question that I recently received from a consumer who was struggling with her research while trying to locate a **Fee-Only financial advisor** whom she can trust:

*I'm a consumer who recently started looking for a **fee-only financial planner**. I am interviewing several. I noticed that some of the largest RIA firms are not on your list, even though they claim to be a **fee-only financial advising** firm. In fact, the managing director whom I spoke with yesterday had never heard of NAPFA. Why is that? Is there a reason that these large firms claiming to be fee-only aren't on your list?*

While I can't speak to other firm's knowledge of NAPFA or the process used by some sources to confirm that the firms they list are Fee-Only, I can confirm that NAPFA is the largest association of **Fee-Only financial planners**. We go beyond the self-proclaimed Fee-Only requirement of other financial planning organizations and vet our advisors to confirm that they are indeed Fee-Only. This vetting process takes place when they join and again at their annual renewal to guarantee that the members we promote to consumers are continuing to meet our strict standards.

Choosing the right financial advisor is one of the biggest decisions you'll make for your financial future. Be sure to use all the free resources available to you in your vetting process. If you're interested in researching **Fee-Only financial planners**, here are some tips.

1. Using the SEC's investment advisor search engine, you can look for firms and individual advisors to see the size of their firm, the amount of assets they manage, and their other business affiliations. You can also determine whether there have been any disciplinary actions against them, and you can review their business brochure, in which they are required to disclose their financial planning process and what they charge for their services.
2. NAPFA's website lists some free consumer resources that have been designed to help you identify what your requirements are and, ultimately, to select the **Fee-Only advisor** who will help you reach your retirement goals.
3. To find the closest **Fee-Only advisor** to you, use NAPFA's Find an Advisor search engine.
4. Finding qualified, independent financial advice is more difficult than it should be. There are many questions to ask before you even start speaking to your potential advisor: Where do I go? Where do I look? What do I ask? NAPFA has created the Pursuit of a Financial Advisor Field Guide to help you on your journey toward finding the right financial advisor for you.

5. Your life is ever-changing, and so are your financial needs. Take a look at NAPFA's free quarterly consumer newsletter Planning Perspectives. In it, we cover up-to-date information on a variety of financial topics that affect your life.

6. Every great transition in life is an opportunity for financial stress. The NAPFA Consumer Education Foundation (NCEF) was created by NAPFA to help educate consumers on the financial concerns that arise during these transitions. NCEF's Managing Life's Financial Journey project focuses on life's transitions rather than on academic financial topics, providing a tool that consumers can use to find just-in-time answers to real-life financial questions.

You can always contact us with any questions that you might have along the way. And remember, don't settle -- the first advisor you find isn't necessarily the best one for you.