

# Application for Financial Advisory Listing/Advertising on The White Coat Investor Website

## Personal and Firm Information

Your Name: Sarah Catherine Gutierrez, CFP; Tim Quillin, CFA; Matt Duncan, CFA

Name of Firm: Aptus Financial

Insert link to your website: <https://www.aptusfinancial.com/>

Insert link to your ADV2:

[https://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov/IAPD/Content/Common/crd\\_iapd\\_Brochure.aspx?BRCHR\\_VRSN\\_ID=533549](https://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov/IAPD/Content/Common/crd_iapd_Brochure.aspx?BRCHR_VRSN_ID=533549)

Which services do you provide:

Financial Planning

Investment Management

Both

Other services (please list): Employer Retirement Plan Advisory Services

Years of financial experience: Sarah Catherine has 15, Tim has 23 and Matt has 18 years of experience.

Years of experience with financial planning or investment management for individuals: Sarah Catherine has 8, Tim has 2 and Matt has 1 year of experience. Our prior experience was providing investment advice to professional fund managers.

Years your firm been in business: 8

Which of the following designations do you hold (Check all that apply):

CFA

CFP

ChFC

CLU

CPA

PFS

EA

MBA

BS or MS in finance related field

Other (please list):

Have you had any events in the past that are reportable to regulatory agencies? If so, please attach explanation.

No

Have any of your former clients sued you? What was the outcome? Please attach explanation.

No

Are you currently involved in a lawsuit by a client or former client? Please attach explanation.

No

## Fee Structure

How do you get paid (check all that apply):

Commissions on investment products

Commissions on insurance products

Hourly rate

Annual retainer

Flat fee for financial plan

AUM Fee

Other (Please list):

How much do you charge? Please list your fee structure. If there is a range of possible fees readers can expect to pay, what is the range and what determines where in the range they would fall. If you use AUM fees, be sure to list what a reader would pay with \$100K, \$500K, \$1M, and \$2M in assets.

**Overview:** Aptus provides financial planning and investment advisory services for flat fees based on the expected time to complete our services at a rate of \$250 per hour. We have no other fees or hidden charges.

**Comprehensive Financial Plan (\$3,000 plus a minimum of 12 months of AptusCare ongoing planning support):** Aptus' comprehensive financial planning process includes two meetings, typically via videoconference, over 3-5 weeks. The first meeting focuses on cash flow management and the second meeting focuses on contingency planning and investment strategy. The client is tasked with gathering information and implementing the plan, but Aptus provides to-do lists, guidance and support. At the end of the process, the client receives a written report that serves as a blueprint for achieving financial independence. Typical topics covered include:

**Financial Review for Long-term DIYers (\$1,000 plus a minimum of 4 months of AptusCare ongoing planning support):** Some of our clients are already successful, long-term DIY planners and investors, but would like an objective, independent review of their cash flow management, contingency planning and investment strategy. In these cases, Aptus can conduct a relatively limited financial review. The process includes a 1-hour meeting as well as planning work before and after the meeting.

**AptusCare (\$125 per month):** Our AptusCare ongoing planning support service facilitates ongoing financial dialogue with our DIY clients to help them stay on track to achieve their financial goals. AptusCare is only available to clients who have completed a comprehensive financial plan or DIY

financial review. AptusCare emphasizes continuous optimization as our clients' planning needs, situations and environments evolve. AptusCare includes:

- Periodic—typically annual—financial check-ups via videoconference or in person.
- Detailed, thoughtful responses to client questions via emails or phone calls.
- Aptus nudges toward fully implementing our planning recommendations.
- Aptus suggestions on the next best financial planning action.

AptusCare contemplates an average of 6 hours per year of Aptus' planning service in support of each client. We may charge a higher fee, commensurate with our hours of service, for clients consistently requiring more than the contemplated time. We may cancel AptusCare support for clients consistently engaging with us significantly less than the contemplated time.

Aptus will increase the monthly charge for AptusCare in \$5 increments based on changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), a measure of inflation calculated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

**Consultation Meetings (~1 hour, ~\$250):** We occasionally meet with clients on an hourly-rate basis to answer specific questions or to focus on specific, limited-scope projects. For instance, we help design, optimize and implement cash flow systems (household budgets) for individuals and families. We even meet with clients who don't really know what they want to discuss, but just need a little help organizing their financial lives.

**Initial Interviews (~15 minutes, free):** For clients that would like to learn more about Aptus, see if there's a good fit and discuss next steps, we conduct free introductory calls. Prospective clients should request to interview us by submitting our [contact form](#).

**Retirement Plan Advisor, Fiduciary and Educator (tailored flat fee):** Aptus' simple, fair flat fees also apply to our unique and innovative retirement plans, for which we serve as advisor, 3(38) fiduciary and financial wellness educator. We work with plan sponsors to craft a tailored pricing agreement that reflects our anticipated hours of service on the plan. Aptus' low, transparent flat-fee pricing is typically applied pro rata based on employee account balances, and should become a smaller percentage of assets over time

What is the minimum amount of assets required for you to take a client?

There is no minimum amount of assets. We work with clients of all income and asset levels.

If you receive payment for insurance product commissions, what percentage of your business revenue do they make up?

We provide transparent, objective, and non-conflicted advice. Period. We don't sell stocks or insurance.

Do you consider yourself a fiduciary?

Yes, and not just in name. Our whole business is designed to provide advice solely in the best interest of our clients. We provide transparent, objective, and non-conflicted advice. Period. We don't sell stocks or insurance. We don't manage assets nor charge an asset-under-management fee. We offer comprehensive financial advice for a flat fee and set our clients up for a lifetime of guided DIY financial budgeting, planning and investing.

Do you routinely sign a fiduciary agreement with clients?

Our standard planning agreement includes language emphasizing our fiduciary standing, but more importantly our whole business model is designed so we can give transparent, objective and non-conflicted advice.

## **Investment Philosophy**

Do you use tactical asset allocation? If so, please explain your process.

No.

Do you believe you can time the market sufficiently well to beat a comparable low-cost index fund after fees?

No.

Do you pick individual stocks for clients?

No.

Do you believe most physicians should own a cash value life insurance policy of any type? If so, what type and why?

Nooooo!

Do you believe you can select mutual fund managers who can beat an index fund in the same asset class over the long term going forward?

No.

What percentage of a typical client portfolio would you place into actively managed mutual funds or ETFs?

We don't currently recommend actively-managed funds, but we continually challenge our assumptions.

What role do fees play in your selection of individual investments?

We recommend an age-appropriate, risk-neutral diversified portfolio of assets that captures the broad market's returns while minimizing fees and taxes.

What fund companies do you routinely use? (Check all that apply)

Vanguard

DFA

Bridgeway

iShares

Other (Please list): We typically recommend Vanguard funds, but are agnostic and have recommended Fidelity, Schwab and iShares index funds when appropriate.

Do you routinely engage in tax-loss harvesting for clients in their taxable accounts?

We don't. Tax loss harvesting works best for wealthy, young, very meticulous and unusually calm clients.

- You must be wealthy enough to save into a taxable account and it helps if you'll never need the money in the taxable account. Otherwise, you're just deferring gains and the associated taxes.
- Assuming you will need the money in your lifetime, it helps to be young, so you can defer the gains and related taxes over a longer period.
- You must be very careful when you sell one index and buy another; we worry that harvesting done poorly could negatively impact pre-tax returns by replacing good, broad indices with imperfect, narrower comparable indices.
- You need to watch your account closely to time the harvesting. Often that level of attention produces anxiety and leads to bad investment decisions. We believe it's generally better to set it and forget it.

## Physician Specific Issues

How many physicians and/or dentists are you currently advising? (i.e. managed assets of or met with in the last year):

We meet with around 200 physician clients per year.

What do you feel is your biggest value-add for a doctor?

We understand physicians' lives and practices. We work with residents to form good saving habits and develop debt management strategies. We work with new attendings to help prioritize spending, saving and debt management after their big step up in income. We work with practice owners to design employer retirement plans. We help mid-career physicians think about contingencies and potential early retirement. We help late-career physicians prepare for retirement and consider estate planning issues.

Do you consider yourself qualified to give high-quality advice on all of the following student loan related issues: IBR, PAYE, REPAYE, PSLF, deferment, forbearance, and student loan refinancing? Why or why not? Is this advice included in your regular fees listed above?

We are well-versed in student loan repayment strategies, including evaluating refinancing alternatives, pursuing public student loan forgiveness and balancing debt paydown versus investing. This is integral to our financial planning services.

How many clients have you assisted with a Backdoor Roth IRA in the last year?

We have probably helped 50 clients start new backdoor Roth contributions over the past year and essentially all our clients make backdoor Roth contributions.

Which of the following accounts do you consider yourself an expert on? (check all that apply)

401(k)

403(b)

457(b)

Individual 401(k)

SEP-IRA

SIMPLE IRA

Traditional IRA

Roth IRA

HSA

Profit-sharing Plan

Defined Benefit/Cash Balance Plan

Others (Please list): We think emergency funds and high-yield savings are important accounts to consider in this context as well.

What steps do you proactively take in a market downturn to improve investor behavior?

In significant market downturns, we encourage clients to rebalance back to their appropriate asset mix. Then we tell them to turn off CNBC, put down the Wall Street Journal and focus on their life.

Anything else that you would like me to take into consideration with regards to your application?  
(Attach additional documentation as desired)

### **The Aptus Difference**

**Principles.** Aptus is a principled financial services company, focused solely on what is best for our clients and free of any conflicts of interest. Our principles drive our pricing.

**Pricing.** We provide honest, expert advice for simple, fair flat fees. Our pricing informs our priorities.

**Priorities.** We don't sell insurance, stocks, mutual funds or any other product. We don't want your assets. Our sole focus is helping our clients achieve their financial goals. We do this with compassion and empathy. Our priorities attract great people.

**People.** We're not salespeople. Our team is highly educated, highly credentialed, and intellectually curious. We're nerds and proud of it. Our people create an effective process.

**Process.** We've developed and are continually refining financial planning and financial wellness processes that are thorough, efficient and effective. Our process inspires passion.

**Passion.** We are passionate about—and adept at—helping people save money. Our mission at Aptus is to give people—across all income levels—the opportunity to retire on their own terms.