

What to Do Upon the Loss of a Loved One

The loss of a loved one can be emotionally challenging and mentally straining. You may be faced with difficult and overwhelming tasks and details to track. Whether you will be handling the details yourself or enlisting the help of a relative or friend, the checklist below can provide a useful road map. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is any way we can be of assistance during this difficult time.

Immediate Considerations

Funeral Home: Make an appointment with a funeral home for arrangements or execute previously made arrangements. Bring the following for the initial meeting:

- Date and place of birth and death, parents' names, names of pre-deceased relatives and survivors, SSN, dates of marriages/divorces
- Notify family, friends and clergy
- Highest level of education and occupation
- Military information including separation or discharge papers (DD-214)
- The deceased's wishes regarding funeral and burial instructions
- Agreement documents showing that all or part of the deceased's funeral costs have been prepaid
- Place of burial or final disposition if cemetery plot has been purchased
- Photographs to be used during the embalming and cosmetizing process
- Clothing, including undergarments and jewelry or glasses, you would like for the viewing
- Request at least 10 copies of the death certificate from the funeral home or county clerk
- Social Security Office and Veterans Affairs Office:** Normally the funeral home will notify Social Security and VA (if applicable) on your behalf.

- Employer:** If the deceased was employed, notify their employer of the death and request information and claim forms on any employee benefits (health insurance, life insurance, retirement plan, pension, etc.), salary, or vacation/sick pay owed. Ask if you or other dependents are still eligible for benefit coverage.
- Life Insurance Company:** : Contact the insurance company or agent to obtain death claim forms you will need to complete and submit. The deceased's financial advisor will often help you with this. If you know the deceased had a life insurance policy but you cannot find it, contact American Council of Life Insurers (www.acli.com), which offers guidance in tracing missing policies.
- Cancel scheduled doctor appointments, etc.

Organize Legal and Financial Documents

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Estate planning documents (Will and Trust) | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce decree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beneficiary designations (name, current address, Social Security numbers, birth date, current phone number) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgages, loans, leases, credit card statements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recent checking and savings account statements | <input type="checkbox"/> Deeds, titles, promissory notes, business interests, royalties, real estate documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety deposit box | <input type="checkbox"/> Life insurance and annuity policies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certificates of deposit and stock certificates | <input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recent brokerage and investment statements | <input type="checkbox"/> Last year's tax returns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement plans and/or recent statements | <input type="checkbox"/> Property and auto insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birth certificate and death certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> Business interests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security card, driver's license, passport, citizenship, military separation papers | <input type="checkbox"/> All current and/or past due bills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> All claim forms |

Schedule Appointment with Professionals and Organizations

Since each estate is unique, your own legal, accounting, and financial professionals can help guide you through the overall process. If you are the Executor, Personal Representative or Trustee, contact the deceased's financial advisor, CPA, and estate planning attorney. They will each have a role in helping you.

Attorney: Meet with an attorney to review the Will and determine whether a petition for probate of the Will must be filed. The attorney will prepare any documents necessary to confirm authority of Successor Trustee of the Trust or Executor or Personal Representative of the Will. The attorney will apply for

a federal EIN for the Estate, if applicable. The attorney will be able to answer any questions regarding the role and responsibilities of the Trustee, Executor, or Personal Representative. The attorney will also review documents and agreements if the deceased had any business interests.

Social Security Administration: Schedule an appointment with the local office to claim survivor benefits. Inquire as to what documents and information will be needed. If the deceased was receiving benefits via direct deposit, request that the bank return funds received for the month of death and thereafter to Social Security. Do not cash any Social Security checks received by mail. Return all checks to Social Security as soon as possible.

Veteran Affairs: Schedule an appointment with the local office to claim survivor benefits. Inquire as to what documents and information will be needed. Benefits to a spouse and heirs may include pension payments and financial aid for educational costs. Bank or Credit Union Institutions: Inquire as to what documents and information will be needed. Meet with a representative to retitle or open new accounts.

Contact Other Organizations, Agencies and Companies

Medicare: Social Security will notify Medicare of the death. If the deceased was receiving Medicare Part D (prescription drug), a Medicare Advantage Plan or a Medigap Policy, contact the plan provider to cancel the policy.

Credit Cards, Merchant Cards and Other Creditors: Notify the deceased's creditors. Close and destroy credit cards held by the deceased and keep records of the amount owed. Update the billing name for all joint credit cards. Check to see if there was additional life insurance connected with the deceased's accounts.

Credit Agencies: Contact the three credit agencies to report the death, Equifax (www.Equifax.com), Experian (www.Experian.com), TransUnion (www.TransUnion.com). This will help eliminate identity theft.

Do Not Contact List: Contact the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) to register the deceased's name on the Deceased Do Not Contact List. This will remove the deceased from commercial marketing lists (www.DMAchoice.org).

Utilities: Update billing name.

Financial Advisor: Inquire as to what documents and information will be needed. Meet with the financial advisor to retitle or open new accounts, identify designated beneficiaries, and transfer or distribute assets. You should also discuss and complete any claim forms for the deceased's life insurance and annuities, and discuss the different options available and how to arrange for income from the deceased's employer retirement plan benefits or union survivor benefits.

Certified Public Accountant: Meet with the CPA to review the tax situation as the surviving spouse, successor Trustee of the Trust, or Executor of the Estate. The Estate may need to file an estate tax return within nine months from the date of death. Inquire as to what information, forms or documents you will need to collect for preparation of the tax return.

Other Organizations: Contact unions, or professional, service, or fraternal organizations of which the deceased was a member. Inquire if they had life insurance or other benefits through these organizations.

Change Titling: Retitle any property (including real estate and automobiles) owned by the deceased. Work with the probate attorney on the timing of these changes.

Other Insurance Carriers: Notify all other insurance carriers including health (medical, dental and vision), long-term care, umbrella, disability, accidental death, travel, vehicle, homeowners or renters insurance.

Mortgages and Loans: Notify each company/party of the death.

Online Accounts: Cancel the deceased's email, social media and other web-based accounts.

Cancel Memberships: Cancel professional associations, unions, health, athletic, automobile, alumni club, etc.

Update Financial Plan

Make sure you have sufficient cash on hand. You may want to take part of life insurance proceeds or other death benefits and increase cash reserves to meet current expenses as well as funeral costs.

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- Meet with your attorney and financial advisor and determine what changes need to be made. In particular, you will likely need to update all beneficiary designations, Wills, Trusts, Powers of Attorney and investment plans.
- Establish a budget and make a list of income and expenses.
- Assess the need for life and health coverage especially if you have minor children.
- Establish an emergency fund, usually 3-6 month's living expenses.

For over half a century D.A. Trust Company has been providing families with the peace of mind knowing that their wishes are being carried out and their loved ones cared for.



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