



STEPS TO TAKE WHEN A LOVED ONE PASSES AWAY

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The passing away of a loved one is often a tumultuous time for families. Whether the death was unexpected or not, there are many tasks to address, all while handling the emotional grief. Below is a checklist to guide your actions and to give you some structure to the days and weeks ahead.

INITIAL STEPS

- Contact Immediate Family**
- Help And Support:** Ask for help from family and friends and utilize support groups
- Notify The Following** (as applicable)
 - Family and friends
 - Decedent's employer
 - Retrieve any personal items
 - Collect owed pay (regular pay, bonuses, vacation, sick pay, etc.)
 - Inquire about continued healthcare coverage and if there are any survivor benefits
 - Financial advisor, accountant and other hired professionals
 - Professional organizations, charities, etc. that the decedent was involved with
- Funeral, Burial, Cremation Or Memorial Service**
 - Determine the decedent's wishes, including if there are any prepaid plans
 - Arrange for a funeral, burial, cremation or memorial service
 - Name a charity for donations if that is preferred over flowers
 - Keep track of who sends donations, flowers, or cards so acknowledgements can be sent
 - Report the death to Social Security (the funeral home often does this on your behalf)
 - If the decedent was a veteran, contact the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) regarding various possible benefits
- Order And Obtain Certified Copies Of Death Certificates:** These will be required for various financial, insurance and estate planning needs
- Estate Planning Documents**
 - Locate estate planning documents (Last Will and Testament, Trusts, etc.)
 - Identify and contact anyone named as executor, trustee, etc.
 - Contact an estate planning attorney
- Secure And Protect Assets**
 - Find checkbooks, Social Security cards, licenses, credit cards, keys, online passwords, cash, jewelry and other tangible items of value
 - Stock and/or bond certificates
 - Deeds and titles



Additional steps if the deceased did not live with you

- Provide care for pets
- Forward mail or permanently change the address

1 TO 3 MONTHS AFTER DEATH

Estate

- Meet with an estate planning attorney to review required steps
- Determine beneficiaries and heirs of assets and personal belongings
- Determine if probate is necessary
- Compile an inventory of assets
- Determine if an estate account is needed

Assets

- Find all assets (statements and tax returns are good starting place)
- Notify financial institutions
- Change account registrations/have decedent removed for any jointly owned assets
- Determine if any securities/assets should be sold for liquidity needs or to reduce risk
- Access safe deposit boxes and home safes
- Change property titles (i.e. real estate, automobiles, etc.)
- Unclaimed Property: If an account is dormant for too long (five years in most states), the account can be transferred to the state treasury under what is called escheatment. Look for unclaimed property here: Unclaimed.org or MissingMoney.com

Insurance and Annuities

- Life Insurance: Process life insurance claims
- Annuities: Contact insurance companies to stop annuity payments and to inquire about survivor benefits, if applicable
- Check if refunds are due for any types of insurances that are terminated

Income: Certain income streams may be payable to the surviving spouse or other beneficiaries

- Social Security: If the decedent was receiving Social Security, contact Social Security to stop payments. Make sure the surviving spouse receives the higher of the two Social Security benefits. The surviving spouse or other family member may be eligible for a one-time lump sum death benefit.
- Veteran's benefits: Contact the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) to stop any payments and to inquire about survivor benefits, if applicable
- Pensions: Contact companies/institutions to stop payments and inquire about pension survivor benefits, if applicable



Expenses, Liabilities And Taxes

- Pay unpaid bills, loans, expenses and taxes as needed
- Cancel any unnecessary services, leases, utilities, magazines/newspapers, etc.
- Close credit card accounts
- Update/cancel insurance policies

Identity Theft Prevention:

- DMV: Cancel driver's license
- Credit reporting agencies: Send a copy of the death certificate to the three major credit agencies (Experian, Equifax and TransUnion) to prevent identity theft
- Cancel voter registration

Other

- Publish obituary and notice to creditors
- Cancel email and social media accounts
- Register for the "Deceased Do Not Contact" list for the Data & Marketing Association (DMA). This helps reduce junk mail in the decedent's name

3+ MONTHS AFTER DEATH

- Distribute remaining assets and personal belongings to beneficiaries
- File final tax returns (for decedent, estate and any trusts) and pay any taxes due
- Close the estate and any trusts
- Review and update your own financial plan (including short and long-term goals)
- Review your own estate planning documents for possible changes, including beneficiary designations for accounts, annuities and life insurance

This list covers many of the main areas to address, but it is not comprehensive.

Remember that you do not have to do everything on your own. There are many professionals and in the financial, legal and health areas who specialize in helping people who have lost a loved one. Decide which tasks you can handle and hire professionals to help you with the others.

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