

What to Do After Losing a Loved One: A Checklist

Having to say goodbye to a loved one is never easy – and if you are authorized to make financial decisions on behalf of them, you may face even more challenges. Closing out someone's personal, financial and legal affairs while grieving their loss can be stressful, so consider using this checklist as a step-by-step guide to help stay on track.

WITHIN THE FIRST TWO WEEKS

- Notify the close family and friends of the deceased.
- Make funeral arrangements and evaluate the funeral and burial expenses.
- Prepare an obituary.

Become the designated personal representative by completing the following:

- Obtain and fill out a copy of a form requesting to be the executor. This can be done through speaking with the clerk of the probate court or looking at your state's probate court website.
- Get the form notarized by an authorized notary public.
- File the form with the Clerk of the Court and pay the filing fee.
- Send the Notice of Application to any individuals interested in the estate (heirs or beneficiaries).

As applicable, notify the following people or groups your loved one was close to:

- Place of work
- Insurance agencies
- Volunteer organizations
- Credit reporting agencies
- Estate planning attorney
- Government agencies (Medicare, Veterans Affairs, DMV, post office)

In addition to our team, notify your following advisors:

- Attorney
- Accountant

Locate and review your loved one's important documentation (your loved one's estate planning attorney may be a resource):

- Will and testament
- Marriage license
- Insurance policies
- Retirement accounts
- Investment accounts
- Death certificate – retrieve 10–20 copies from the funeral director or county clerk's office
- Mortgage documents

Complete the following tasks:

- Meet with our team to discuss various financial needs. Bring along the following documents:
 - Income tax returns
 - Documentation from deceased's employer (final paycheck, employee benefit information including 401(k) plan, W-2 form for the year of death).
 - Copies of any investment or bank statements
- Take an inventory of the deceased's assets, both personal and financial.
- Begin settling the estate by distributing your loved one's assets according to state law and any provisions made by them in advance.
- Remove items from the safe deposit box and distribute them to their intended recipients. Rules vary for accessing safe deposit boxes by state, so it may be helpful to research the requirements in your specific state or contact your loved one's estate planning attorney.
- Secure the residence (change locks, find people to care for pets and plants, forward mail, cancel subscriptions).
- Track any expenses associated with securing the residence for eventual reimbursement by the estate.
- Continue to maintain certain expenses, like your loved one's mortgage, taxes and utilities.

WITHIN THE FIRST MONTH

Complete the following extra tasks:

- Create copies of the will.
- File the will with the probate court – the court will keep the original copy.
- Retitle jointly held assets such as bank accounts, automobiles, stocks and bonds, and real estate.
- Evaluate pre-existing benefits elections and beneficiaries.

As applicable, notify the following people or groups your loved one was associated with:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> A former employer's Human Resources department – they can help explain benefits that may be available to you and any deadlines in place | <input type="checkbox"/> Car loan company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pension administrators | <input type="checkbox"/> Banks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage company | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility companies |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Investment companies |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security |

WITHIN ONE TO SIX MONTHS

- Inform others with a relationship to the deceased (dentists, doctors, etc.).
- Deactivate or memorialize social media accounts.
- Periodically check the deceased's credit report to ensure no new accounts have been opened under their name.
- Close out any credit cards in the deceased's name.
- Inventory the deceased's home and everything specified in the will.

WITHIN SIX TO TWELVE MONTHS

- File a federal (and potentially a state) estate tax return on behalf of the decedent.
- Value the deceased's property through a licensed real estate appraiser.
- File Estate Tax Form 706 with a financial advisor. This form helps calculate estate tax and generation-skipping transfer tax owed.
- Appraise the deceased's assets through a professional appraiser.
- Establish charitable contributions or memorials.
- Review and update your own legal and estate planning documents (especially if the deceased was a beneficiary).