

A Guide To
UNFINISHED
BUSINESS



The intent of this guide is to help you with the unfinished paperwork and decisions that can be overwhelming after the death of a loved one.

The information and suggestions within this guide are designed to assist you, but do not replace additional professional guidance that may be necessary from your attorney, CPA, or us. This information is a general overview and may not be complete depending on your individual situation. Please be advised that this document is not intended as legal advice and you should consult with an attorney concerning any questions you may have.

We hope this information will help make the coming days and months a little easier.

_____ Handle all arrangements for final disposition.

There are two types of Certified Copies of Death Certificates that are issued:

WITH CAUSE OF DEATH SHOWING

The following normally require the cause listed:

- Life Insurance
- Employee Benefits: pension, annuities, 401K's
- Auto Insurance (only if this was cause of death)
- Personal Records: a copy for the family

WITHOUT CAUSE OF DEATH SHOWING

The following normally *do not* require the cause listed:

- Social Security (if spouse or minor child is to claim death benefit)
- Veteran Administration (if eligible for death benefits) www.va.gov
- Title Transfers (real estate, titles of vehicles, boats, etc)*
- Banking (checking, money market, safe deposit, credit cards)*
- Financial Professionals
- Income Tax (will not accept with the cause of death listed)
- Probate Courts (will not accept with the cause of death listed)
- Homestead Exemption (will not accept with the cause of death listed)*
- Utility Companies (water, electric, cable, phone, etc)
- Cell Phone Account

_____ **Locate the Will.**

You may need to contact the personal representative (if applicable) and/or an attorney. A valid Will must be filed with the probate court (in the county of residence) within ten days of the date of death. Filing can be done in person or by mail.

_____ **Pay bills.**

Pay bills that may be delinquent or due within a few days, such as utility bills, secured loans and car payments. A refund may be due on loan payments if there is insurance coverage on the unpaid balance.

WITHIN 30 DAYS:

_____ **Keep a phone log of business conversations.**

This will help in remembering who you talked with and what the outcome was. The log should include: the date, the person's name and a brief summary of the conversation.

_____ **Prepare and send acknowledgment cards.**

For flowers, memorial donations, food or spiritual remembrances.

_____ **Notify insurance companies or insurance agent.**

Request and file appropriate forms for:

- Life
- Health
- Medical
- Supplemental
- Prescription drug plans
- Disability
- Travel and accident
- Homeowner's
- Automobile, etc.

(Please note that you may also consider changing the beneficiaries on your policies at this time.)

_____ **Notify any Retirement Benefits.**

_____ **Social Security.**

Notify the Social Security Administration of the death after the arrangements are made. If checks are a direct deposit, notify the bank of the death. Social Security is paid in arrears – the check you get for this month is for last month. A \$255.00 death benefit is payable to a surviving spouse or a minor child only. Other follow up may be necessary to change or apply for benefits. The toll free number is: 1-800-772-1213. *Best times to call are 5PM or 7AM EST.

_____ **Notify sources of any other Pension Benefits.**

- Previous employers' worker compensation
- Veterans Affairs

WITHIN 60 TO 90 DAYS:

_____ **Meet with your financial professional(s)**

and/or investment representatives to change ownership, beneficiary designations, and tax identification number on accounts.

_____ **Notify your bank(s)** to change ownership and tax identification number, if necessary. Remember to leave one joint checking account open for at least one year to handle any payments or checks that may be payable to the deceased.

- Savings, checking, money market, and CD accounts should be reviewed.
- Inquire about mortgage loans, installment loans, and credit card accounts. Each lending institution may have a different policy with regard to changes due to death. Also check these accounts for any possible credit life insurance policy that may exist which would pay off the unpaid balance.
- Review who the authorized parties are on safe deposit boxes and make appropriate changes.
- Cancel any direct deposits, if necessary.
- Change IRA accounts if necessary (title, beneficiaries, etc.)

_____ **Notify all other credit card companies:**

- Look at your monthly statement. The 1st name on the statement is the person who has the credit. The 2nd name on the statement is an authorized user of the 1st person's credit. If you call and tell them the person passed away, there is a good chance they will cancel the account and NOT give the credit to the 2nd person.
- Inquire about credit life insurance coverage on unpaid balances.
- Cancel all individually held cards of the deceased or transfer the account to the survivor, if possible.
- Inquire as to their procedure for jointly held accounts.



AJH Wealth Management
13890 Bishop's Dr., Suite 405
Brookfield, WI 53005
(414) 763-3867
www.ajhwealth.com

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