

WHEN YOU LOSE A LOVED ONE



**Step by step instructions to guide you through
essential logistic & administrative tasks**

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Our deepest sympathy

*To send our deepest sympathy
Just doesn't seem like enough.
We know how your grief must burden you,
How this time must be so rough.*

*But try to believe in your heart of hearts,
That your pain won't last forever,
That sadness will lighten a little each day,
And you'll eventually feel much better.*

*When that day comes, your memories
Will focus on the good, not the bad.
Instead of feeling burdened by tears,
You'll cherish the happy times you had.*

- Author Unknown



When you need us, we're here to help

This handbook has been designed to help you understand which actions you need to take immediately, and which can wait until you've had a little more time to consider your options.



It may be that your loved one made some preparations in advance of his or her death, and perhaps there are wishes they wanted you to carry out. If so, the material in this booklet will help you do so smoothly and efficiently. If no preparations were made, this booklet will help you understand the steps you will be expected to take—and when—as well

as which steps you can delegate to others, such as friends, family members, and/or your beneficiary support team.

We understand that losing a loved one can be difficult emotionally and financially. This is why we have established a beneficiary support team to help lift this burden off your shoulders.

To help you determine if you qualify for certain benefits, you will find sample letters you can send to creditors, Social Security, insurance companies and other organizations to which your loved one belonged. Finally, it outlines the different settlement options

available to you as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy and how to elect one or more of them.

When you have questions, feel free to contact our office. We have helped numerous families through this process and have been able to help lift the burden off of their shoulders.

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How to Take Care of What You're Feeling

With the death of a spouse, child or parent, the grief can last even longer. Yet while each relationship creates its own form of bereavement, one thing does remain constant, grief will not just go away on its own – or by avoiding it. There is some evidence, in fact, that the stress induced by denial of the mourning process can even cause illness.

The death of a loved one has a profound effect on the mental state of those left behind. For some, the loss of a spouse is devastating and its effects are long lasting. For others, it is more manageable. In either case, the death of a spouse irrevocably alters the daily structure, care taking, companionship and social life of the one left behind.

Grief is a multi-stage process wherein stages may overlap, leaving you with emotions that swing dramatically from one extreme to another. At first you may experience disbelief, numbness and shock. You may find that your eating or sleeping patterns change, and that your mind becomes cluttered, leaving no time or room for anything else.

Then, as you begin to feel the separation, you may become extremely depressed and lonely.

Sometimes you may find yourself avoiding anything that reminds you of the deceased and other times you may surround yourself with mementos. You may have trouble concentrating, appearing disorganized and forgetful. Normal, everyday dealings may become annoying. And there will be days when you can't help but act irritable, anxious or restless.



“Those who grieve need
to give themselves
permission to mourn.”



Finding the Support You Need



One way to help resolve your grief is to reach out to those around you for support and understanding. One of the best ways is to share your feelings with others.

Family and friends are usually the first people we turn to in time of need. And yet, if family and friends are going through their own grieving process, they may not be able to lend as much support to you as you need.

You may also feel separated from your friends and/or that you no longer fit in with the same social circle. If you've lost a spouse, you may find it awkward to be around couples. If you've lost a child, you may feel uneasy about being around friends who have children.

Perhaps the best way you can gain support is to reach out to an organization that specializes in assisting people to cope with their losses. There are many community service organizations, as well as your own house of worship that could serve as a resource for bereavement groups.

Sometimes sharing your grief with others who are facing similar issues

and who have similar needs can be most helpful.

You need to be well. Whether you feel up to it or not, you must take care of yourself. That means keeping both mind and body healthy. This is extremely important, since one of life's greatest stresses - the death of someone close - can take a toll on your health.

Be sure you get regular exercise, proper nutrition and rest, and consult your physician about any physical ailments, including sleep disturbances, loss of energy or appetite.

We hope what you find on the next few pages will help you organize and prioritize what needs to be done during this time. We also hope that it will help you realize that you don't need to do everything right away and that it is okay to take some time for yourself.



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The First Few Days



- Call Your Beneficiary Support Team**

During these first few days you will have many responsibilities and your beneficiary support team can lift some of the burdens off your shoulders. They can often provide you copies of the deceased's estate planning documents, copies of financial documents and also prepare death benefit claims in order to help with the necessary funeral expenses.
- Find the Estate Planning Documents**

Funeral instructions may be contained in the will, and, therefore, it should be the first document you locate. Usually the will is kept in a safe deposit box or in a home safe. However, a copy may be obtained from your beneficiary support team.
- Make Funeral or Memorial Service Arrangements**

Russon Mortuary Funeral directors often help notify newspapers and associations for the purpose of publishing a death notice.

Order 10 or more Certified Death Certificates

You may obtain death certificates from either Russon Mortuary's funeral directors or the County Clerk's office. This can usually be done for a nominal fee. You will need certified copies of death certificates to claim Social Security and insurance benefits, change of ownership of joint property, to enter safe deposit boxes and to file tax returns. Larger estates may require as many as 50 certificates. Photocopies are sometimes acceptable. However, most organizations and companies require originals.

Check with Social Security and the Veterans Administration

You may qualify for burial allowances. The VA also provides a marker for the grave, an American flag for the casket and, in some cases, transportation to a Veterans Cemetery. Contact the VA again within the next two weeks to discuss death benefits.

Clip Obituary Notices

Some insurance companies require a dated newspaper announcement in order to process claims. Many people also want them for their personal records.

Check the Status of your Medical Insurance Coverage

Spouse and children may be entitled to continue their medical coverage under the deceased's employee benefit plan as long as they continue to pay the premiums.

Contact Each Financial Institution where the Deceased Banked

A bank may seal the deceased's safe deposit box and may freeze any checking or savings accounts after the death announcement is published. You may then be required to obtain a release before funds can be withdrawn from those accounts. A bank officer can explain the procedure for obtaining a release.

Apply for Death Benefits

Contact companies and organizations to notify them the insured is deceased. Employment and membership organization benefits do not come automatically. You must apply for them. Some of the people/organizations you may want to contact are: deceased's employer/former employer, banks/credit unions, Social Security administration, Veterans Administration, insurance company(ies), credit card company(ies), clubs and organizations, etc. Refer to "Checklist of Important Documents and Actions" in the appendix. (You may want to contact Social Security and the Veterans Administration right away because a delay in applying can result in loss of some benefits.)

A word of caution

You should plan on someone to watch your home during the funeral services. Burglars have been known to read obituaries to find out when no one will be home.



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The First Two Weeks



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Locate Important Papers & Documents (see appendix)

Certain documentation is needed to claim death benefits. You will need to check with the deceased's beneficiary support team who may know of a certain business arrangements that you are not aware of and who will help access tax records. Do not throw out any documents such as life insurance policies and certificates, even if the policy holder stopped paying premiums, the policy may still be in force. In addition, cancelled checks and receipts may be needed to prove a payment or ownership.

If Children are in College, Contact Their School's Financial Aid Office

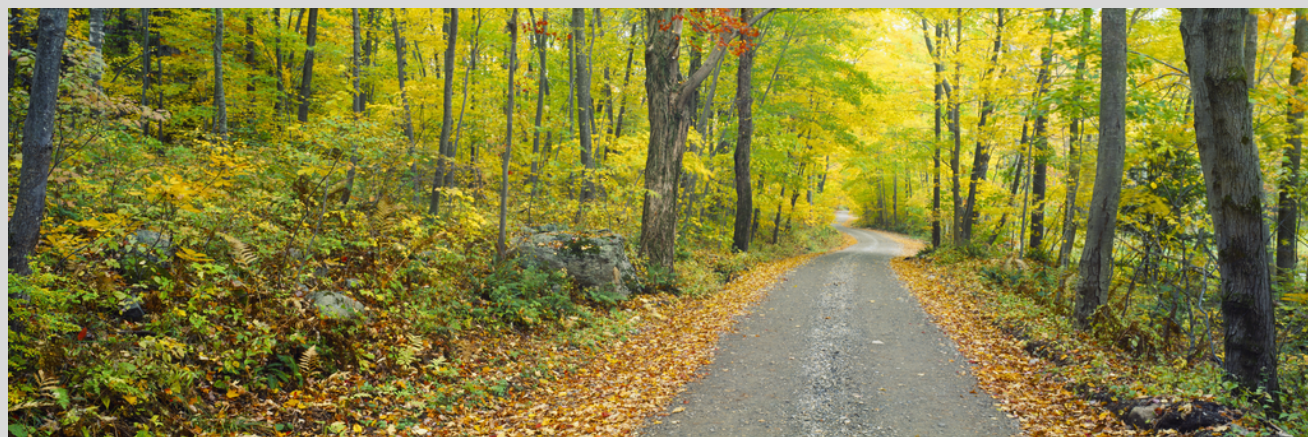
When a parent dies, college students are often eligible for increased financial aid, loans or grants.

Discuss Outstanding Debts with Your Beneficiary Support Team

Be sure to notify all agencies that hold installment loans, credit cards, mortgages, student loans and service contracts about the death. Ask if any outstanding loans are insured, or if any life insurance benefits are available. Do not use insurance proceeds to pay debts of the deceased, unless advised to do so by your beneficiary support team. Some of these loans may become fully paid in the event of a customer's death. (See Sample Letters in the appendix.)

Contact the Trust Officer

If a trust was established by the deceased, discuss the terms of the trust with your beneficiary support team.





The First Month

Set Aside Your Inheritance and Death Benefits

If you are the beneficiary of a policy insuring the deceased, you may want to set aside this money in a savings account until you determine how to invest your money and/or pay off debts. Your beneficiary support team can help you manage your finances in order to help protect against inflation, taxes, and long term care.

Review Your Life, Disability & Long-Term Care Insurance Coverage

Your needs may have changed; therefore, your life, disability and/or long-term care insurance needs may be different. You may want to discuss your situation with your beneficiary support team.

Start or Continue to Establish Your Credit Rating

This can be done by applying for credit cards, bank or car loans in your own name. Always remember, if you apply for a credit card or loan it is important to make your monthly payments. Otherwise, it can hurt your credit score as opposed to helping build your credit rating.



THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

Review Your Own Will, Trust, Power of Attorney & Advanced Directive

If you don't have a will, trust, power of attorney and advanced directive, have an attorney prepare them for you. Some people mistakenly believe that because they have a will they won't need a trust or vice versa. Almost always you need both, because they work together. These documents are useful while you're alive to help you manage your affairs while you travel or if you need long-term care. They will also be needed upon your passing.

Find Out if State and Federal Taxes on the Estate are Payable and When They are Due

Many states impose either an inheritance tax or state estate tax. Ask your certified public accountant or check your state law for filing deadlines. The federal government also taxes estates valued above a certain amount and requires a return to be filed within typically nine months. Since tax laws are complicated, and can have a tremendous effect on you, consult a certified public accountant who is familiar with the laws of your state.

Change Names on Joint Property

Be sure to include joint billing accounts, credit cards, house, property, automobiles and subscriptions. Once your property is released from joint tenancy, you should change any fire, auto or other insurance coverage you may have held jointly. Change beneficiary designations on life insurance policies and retirement plans that named the deceased. Contact your local Motor Vehicle Department to clear title to your automobile, since it is handled differently in each state.

Postpone the Decision on Where to Live for at Least Six Months

If you feel the need to act sooner, consider taking temporary measures such as renting out your house instead of selling it, visiting family for a week or two before moving, or taking a long vacation before relocating. This will give you a chance to feel out a new neighborhood, living arrangements and conveniences.

Prepare a budget

Record all income and expenses for several months to help determine where you stand financially. Another way to determine your household budget is to review your checking account and tax forms. Estate settlement papers are also a good source of income information.

Budget Outline

Monthly Income	\$	Monthly Expenses	\$
Social Security		Auto Expenses	
Salary/Bonus/Tips		Auto Insurance	
Pension: _____		Charitable Contributions	
VA Benefits		Food/Entertainment	
Rental Income		Gifts	
Annuity: _____		Health Insurance	
Earnings (Savings)		Home Owners Insurance	
Earnings (Investments)		Medical/Dental/Rx	
Other:		Mortgage/Rent	
		Taxes (Federal & State)	
		Utilities	
		Vacation	
		Other:	
Total Income		Total Expenses	
Less Total Expenses			
Balance			



The First Year

Plan For Your Future

- Begin to make decisions you have postponed, including changing your residence and investing your inheritance to meet your long term objectives. Short term liquid investments (i.e. bank accounts) will rob you of your purchasing power in the future (i.e. people could buy a gallon of gasoline for under \$1.00 in 2000).
- It is strongly advisable to talk with your beneficiary support team, who is made up of financial advisors, certified public accountants (CPA's), and attorneys, who can help you align your finances, taxes and legal documents with your goals and objectives. It is also important to remember that creating a plan is not a one-time event. Your goals and objectives will continue to evolve.

Commonly Asked Questions and Answers

Q: My spouse let his or her whole life insurance policy lapse several years ago, but we paid premiums on it for many years. Could there still be coverage?

A: There may be. Most whole life insurance contracts have non-forfeiture provisions that are triggered when the policy holder stops paying premiums prior to the maturity of the contract. The two most common provisions are “reduced paid-up” death benefits and “extended term” insurance. Reduced paid-up coverage is the amount of life insurance that can be purchased using the net cash value available in the policy on the day of default. Extended term converge keeps the policy in force temporarily as term insurance. The death benefit will depend on the net cash value of the policy on the day of default.

Q: I was covered under my spouse’s group health insurance plan. Will that coverage continue?

A: This depends upon the type of coverage the employer was providing and, in some cases, on the size of the employer. The employer or its benefits administrator can provide you with the details about continuation of coverage.

Q: My spouse died without a will, but it was his or her intention to leave everything to me. How do I make certain that his or her wishes are carried out?

A: Unfortunately, if your spouse died without a will, the disposition of his or her estate will be governed by the laws of the state in which they lived. Some states divide a deceased’s assets equally between the surviving spouse and any children. Other states make no provision for children.

Administering the estate of an individual who has died without a will can be costly and time-consuming, and may not ultimately reflect the final wishes of the deceased. To this end, the importance of drafting a will cannot be overstated.

Q: What kind of Social Security benefits do I qualify for and when can I receive them?

A: Depending upon the year you were born and your work status, you’ll most likely qualify for Social Security benefits sometime between the age of 65 and 67. You can also collect a reduced amount of benefit beginning at age 62. When your spouse dies, you may be entitled to his or her benefits, though the exact amount you receive will depend upon your age. If divorced, you still may be entitled to a portion of your former spouse’s benefits.

Settling the affairs of a loved one can be difficult, stressful and time consuming.

Our Goal in preparing this handbook has been to help make that process a little easier and more orderly.

We have appreciated our relationship with your loved one before they passed away and have helped numerous beneficiaries during this difficult time. We want you to know that you are not alone and your beneficiary support team is willing and able to help you down this path.

Our Commitment is to help our clients and their families pursue their retirement and estate planning objectives.



APPENDICES

Checklist of Important Documents & Actions

Documents	Purpose of Documents	Likely Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Life insurance policies, brokerage statements, and/or annuity contracts (or policy number or contract numbers) on the deceased	May be needed to file claims, change ownership, and/or inquire about methods of payments	Contact your beneficiary support team
<input type="checkbox"/> Certified death certificates	Required to process claims Required to apply for Social Security benefits, including Railroad retirement Act benefits, burial allowance, lump sum benefit Required to change ownership on joint property, such as house, property, stocks, bonds, automobile, bank accounts Required to enter safe deposit box Required to file tax return	Request certified copies from Funeral Director or County Clerk's office
<input type="checkbox"/> Obituary notice and newspaper articles	May be required for processing claims	Clip from local newspaper and make sure it includes the date
<input type="checkbox"/> Certificates of appointments (if you are filing as executor, administrator or in any other fiduciary responsibility)	May be required for processing claims and disposing of assets	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe, file cabinet, or your beneficiary support team
<input type="checkbox"/> Will	Bring to probate court	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe, file cabinet, or your beneficiary support team

Checklist of Important Documents & Actions

Documents	Purpose of Documents	Likely Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage certificate(s)	Required to apply for Social Security benefits Required to apply for VA benefits (photocopy OK)	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Names and addresses of heirs, next of kin, beneficiaries	Bring to your attorney Bring to Probate Court if you are not using an attorney	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe or from memory
<input type="checkbox"/> Summary of deceased's assets	Bring to your beneficiary support team	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files; these papers might include the Form W-2, recent tax returns or property and casualty insurance records
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee benefits statement for deceased	Help determine the benefits you are entitled to as the survivor	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe, file cabinet, or contact employer
<input type="checkbox"/> Your retirement plans and employee benefits	Change beneficiary designation	Safe deposit box, home office desk, computer files, safe or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Numbers	Required to apply for Social Security benefits	Wallet, Form W-2, paycheck stub or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Deceased's approximate earnings during the year of death	Required to apply for Social Security benefits	Paycheck stub, or contact the employer

Checklist of Important Documents & Actions

Documents	Purpose of Documents	Likely Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Government life insurance policy number (or the “C” claim number, military service serial number, the branch and date of military service or a copy of the discharge papers)	Required to apply for VA benefits	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe or file cabinet The VA can help you secure some of these documents
<input type="checkbox"/> Membership cards or dues notices to organizations and associations to which the deceased belonged	Ask what benefits you are entitled to as the survivor They may pro-rate the membership fees	Home or office desk, briefcase, and/or wallet
<input type="checkbox"/> Bank statements and passbooks, keys to safe deposit box	Ask the bank if the deceased had mortgage insurance, safe deposit box, trust agreements, and/or bank statements	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe, file cabinet or online accounts
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire, homeowners, automobile and other casualty insurance coverage	Change name on policies	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical and disability insurance policies and certificates	Needed to review amount and type of coverage you need now	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Current bills	Discuss with family and/or your beneficiary support team	Monitor mail for two months
<input type="checkbox"/> Installment payment books, credit cards, checking account book, credit agreements, loan papers	Find out if there is a credit life insurance or disability insurance on installments loans, credit cards and checking account lines of credit Change name on existing accounts	File cabinet, online accounts, home or office desk and/or computer files Also monitor mail for two months

Checklist of Important Documents & Actions

Documents	Purpose of Documents	Likely Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Joint billing statements	Change name on these accounts	Home or office desk, computer files, and/or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Real estate deeds	Required to change name on these deeds	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, safe and / or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Brokerage and mutual fund statements, stock, bonds and securities certificates	Change name on deceased's account and joint account	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, safe, and / or file cabinet
<input type="checkbox"/> Automobile registration	Required to change name	Safe deposit box, home or office desk, computer files, safe or file cabinet



Sample

To The Deceased's Employer

Attention: Human Resources/ Benefits
Department

To Whom it May Concern:

My husband/wife, [Name], who was an employee of your company, died on [Date].

Would you kindly forward me information about any benefits, such as group life, pension funds, retirement plans, accrued vacation or sick time, disability pay, terminal pay allowance, gratuity payments, unpaid commissions, bonuses, expense reimbursements or other benefits for which [Name] may have qualified?

Would you also let me know if there are supporting documents you may need, or forms that I am required to submit, in order to collect these benefits?

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Name]

To Social Security

To Whom it May Concern:

My husband/wife, [Name], died on [Date].

I would like to schedule a meeting with a representative to discuss filing a claim for any benefits that may be due to me and my family. I would prefer to meet on [date and time]. If that is not possible, please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule an appointment. Also, please let me know what records you will need in order to process payment of benefits (for example, birth and death certificates, marriage license, Social Security numbers, etc.).

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Letters

To The Insurance Company

Re: Policy number 0000000

To Whom it May Concern:

Please be advised that my husband/wife, [Name], insured under the above policy number, died on [Date].

As the policy beneficiary, I request that you forward claim forms and instructions to me at your earliest convenience. I would also like to exercise my rights to select a settlement option.

Please find attached a certified copy of the insured's death certificate, dated [Date]. Please also search your files for any other policies or accounts [Name] may have had with your company.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Name]

To Credit Card Companies & Other Organizations

Attention: Member Services / Customer Service

To Whom it May Concern:

My husband/wife, [Name], [a member of your organization] or [owner of credit card number [000-000-0000], died on [date].

Would you kindly forward me information about any benefits, such as group life, annuity, disability, accident, or other benefits available to [members] [card members] for which [Name] may have qualified?

Would you also let me know if there are supporting documents you need, or forms I am required to submit, in order to collect these benefits?

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Your beneficiary support team



801-683-6000



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