

Prairie Wealth Advisors

Lincoln Office
8101 O Street, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68510
Phone: 402-488-4477
Fax: 402-488-4454

www.prairiewealthadvisors.com
info@prairiewealthadvisors.com

Omaha Office:
10250 Regency Circle, Suite 115
Omaha, NE 68114
Phone: 402-505-6810
Fax: 402-505-8765



Checklist: Death of a Loved One

It can be a difficult experience to lose a loved one, especially when you must complete important tasks including making final arrangements, financial decisions, settling estates, notifying the proper businesses, agencies and more. Below is a checklist that may help guide you through this difficult time (please note that some tasks may have to be completed by the estate's executor).

IMMEDIATE STEPS

- Call clergy, close family members and friends. Emotional support is important during the loss of a loved one.
- Make funeral, memorial (including cultural if applicable) and burial or cremation arrangements. Your loved one may have made their final arrangement plans ahead of time. Be sure to check for a letter of instruction containing their final wishes. These instructions may also be included within their will or estate planning documents.
- Arrange bereavement leave with your own employer.
- Notify your loved one's place of employment and arrange to pick up any belongings from their workplace. Collect any salary, vacation or sick pay owed. Ask about continuing health insurance coverage and potential survivor's benefits for a spouse or children.
- Notify any union and organizations in which they were involved. Be sure to inquire if any of these offer death benefits.
- Publish an obituary.
- Obtain certified copies of the death certificate. The medical examiner or family doctor should provide you with the death certificate within 24 hours of the death. Typically, the funeral home will complete the form and file it accordingly with the state.
- Report your loved one's death to Social Security by contacting the local office or by calling (800) 772-1213. In most cases, the funeral director will report the death to the Social Security Office.

WITHIN 1-3 MONTHS

- Make a list of your loved one's assets and put safeguards in place to protect any property.
- Continue to pay mortgage and insurance payments while the estate is being settled.
- Locate all insurance policies including individual and group life insurance, mortgage insurance, auto credit life insurance, credit card insurance, annuities, accidental death and dismemberment. Contact these companies and file claims.
- Contact past employers regarding pension plans and contact IRA custodians or trustees. Review designated beneficiaries and post-death distribution options.
- Notify credit card companies of your loved one's death and cancel all cards (unless you are also named on the card and want to retain it).
- If your loved one owned, controlled or was a principal in a business, check to see if there are any buy-sell agreements under which their interest must be sold.
- Retitle jointly held assets such as real estate, vehicles, bank accounts, stocks and bonds.



CONTINUED...

WITHIN 6-12 MONTHS

- Update your own estate plan if your loved one was a beneficiary or appointed as an agent, trustee or guardian.
- If your loved one was named as a beneficiary on any of your retirement plans (including IRA's), insurance policies etc., you will need to update your beneficiary designations.
- Reevaluate your short-term and long-term budgets and finances.
- Re-evaluate your insurance needs.
- Re-evaluate your investment options.



HELPFUL TIPS

Discount Airline Tickets: Many airlines offer Bereavement Fares for individuals who need to make last minute travel arrangements due to the death of a loved one. Check with your airline when booking your airfare for availability and details.

Obtain Extra Copies of the Death Certificate: You may want to order multiple certified copies of the death certificate. When applying for benefits or settling the estate, certified copies will likely be required.

Military or Veteran Memorial Benefits: If your loved one was active Military or a Veteran, you may be eligible for memorial and burial benefits. Contact your local VA Regional Office.

Social Security Benefits: If your loved one was receiving social security benefits via direct deposit, contact the bank to have the funds returned (for the month of their death and the months following if applicable). If they were receiving Social Security checks via mail, do not cash these and return them to the Social Security Office as soon as possible. Surviving spouses and other family members may be eligible for a \$255 lump-sum death benefit and/or survivor's benefits.

Work-Related Death: If your loved one's death was work-related, their estate or beneficiaries may be entitled to worker's compensation benefits.

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