

Checklist: What to do After the Death of a Spouse

- Notify family, friends, current and former employers, your estate planning attorney, financial advisor, and accountant
- Get multiple copies of the death certificate
- Have someone watch the house during the funeral or memorial service
- Arrange to have any pets taken care of in-home or boarded
- Forward mail if you plan to be away from the home for an extended period
- Gather financial documents, including:
 - Bank statements
 - Investment account statements (brokerage and/or trust accounts)
 - Retirement account statements and beneficiary designations
 - Life insurance policies and beneficiaries
 - Pension details
 - Estate planning documents
 - Tangible assets and your spouse's personal property
 - Outstanding debts or liabilities, including any mortgage or loan balances, credit card balances, and unpaid bills
- Discuss credit card ownership, bank ownership, and how bills are being paid with your attorney
- Ensure funeral home has notified Social Security; discuss your benefits
- Review estate plan provisions and flow of assets with your attorney
- Consider what, if any, unpaid employer benefits or pension benefits exist

This checklist is intended to be an instructional overview of some of the key factors to consider and action items following the death of a spouse. Other action items and considerations will apply depending on your situation. Consult your legal, tax, and financial advisors to discuss your personal situation.

- Discuss options for retirement accounts where you are named beneficiary with your financial advisor; ensure required minimum distributions (RMDs) were taken the year of death, if required
- Evaluate your income and expenses going forward to identify gaps or a surplus
- Remove your spouse's Social Security number from joint accounts; close accounts they owned individually after assets have been transferred
- Review your spouse's non-financial accounts and expenses, such as streaming services, websites, and subscriptions to cancel unnecessary services
- Consider your housing options and where you will want to live, being aware that mortgages aren't transferrable, and an automatic real estate tax lien will be placed on the property
- Update your homeowners' insurance, especially if you plan to move out of the home before it is sold
- Discuss the pros and cons of disclaiming certain assets with your attorney and financial advisor (deadline is 9 months after death)
- Be aware of individual tax filing deadlines (April 15th) and estate tax filing deadlines (9 months after death) by speaking with your attorney and accountant
- Request basis adjustments when eligible for a step-up in basis (financial advisor can assist with investment accounts)
- Ensure valuations are completed as necessary
- Evaluate health insurance options and notify Medicare and Medigap to reduce premiums and discuss whether you still have the same Part D coverage needs
- Find out if your spouse had equity interests, including stock options or awards
- Review and revise your estate plan

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- Look for money in a PayPal or Venmo account and investigate other benefits, such as credit card points or miles
- Download photos and other digital assets from document storage or social media sites; manage the online presence of your spouse
- Check your state's abandoned property website right after your spouse dies, and periodically after – for both you and your spouse
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