

# Financial Checklist

## 1. Call your attorney.

There are several legal and financial considerations once a loved one has passed. Your attorney can help you understand the process and the laws within your state.

## 2. Contact the Social Security Administration.

Depending on circumstances, you may be eligible for survivor benefits. (**Learn more about survivor benefits from [ssa.gov](https://www.ssa.gov).**) You cannot accomplish this online; to report a death or apply for benefits, call 800-772-1213, or **visit your local Social Security office.**

## 3. Locate your spouse or partner's will.


Generally, it's filed with an attorney, or in a lockbox or safe deposit box. Your attorney can help with the process of settling the estate. (Don't have your own will? Work with your attorney to create one)

## 4. Notify your spouse's employer.

The human resources department can help with information on benefits due to beneficiaries as well as retirement or pension plans. If you or your children were covered through your spouse's medical insurance, ask about continuing coverage. Notify your employer, too, since the death of a spouse may be a "life event" that could trigger benefit decisions.

## 5. Contact your spouse's former employers.

There may be things that benefit you, such as life insurance policies, a pension, or an old 401(k).

 Tip: Ask the funeral director for certified copies of the death certificate. Many of the companies you'll need to contact will require it.

## 6. Check with the Veteran's Administration.

If your spouse served in the military, you may be eligible for veterans benefits. (For more information on veteran's benefits visit [va.gov](http://va.gov).)

## 7. Notify all insurance companies, including life and health.

Ask for links or hard copies of claim forms and instructions. The sooner you start, the sooner you may receive benefits.

## 8. Change all property titles.

Remove your spouse's name and update ownership documents and insurance policies, such as auto and homeowner's. Your county recorder is a good place to start.

## 9. Change titles on all joint bank, investment, and credit accounts.

Close accounts that were in your spouse's name only or change the account holder information. Ask your financial institutions for the appropriate forms.

## 10. Contact all three major credit bureaus.

Request a copy of your spouse's credit reports so you're aware of all debts and any open accounts. The three major bureaus (**Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion**) can place a notification in the credit report that says "Deceased—do not issue credit," so new credit isn't taken out in your spouse or partner's name.

## 11. Meet with your accountant/tax preparer.

Taxes for your spouse must be filed and paid in the year of death. Especially if the tax preparation is complicated, it may be helpful to rely on a tax professional.

## 12. If you have a kid in college, contact the financial aid office.

Depending on the school and your financial situation, your child may qualify for more assistance.

## 13. Discuss next steps with a financial professional.

A financial professional can help you **update your financial plan** based on benefits you've received. You can also discuss changes in the short term, such as a budget, and long term, including your retirement plan and investment options. **(Read about creating a retirement plan.)** **If you don't have one, we can help you find a financial professional in your area.**

"Don't be afraid to ask for help during this difficult time," Poorman says. "Family and friends can be a great resource to help you stay organized, especially if they've been through a loss themselves."