

# SURVIVING SPOUSE CHECKLIST

When your spouse dies, you may face grief, fear and uncertainty with a flood of emotions that make managing your finances seem almost impossible. This checklist is designed to help you get and stay organized.

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## AFTER THE FUNERAL

- Postpone making any important decisions for the first couple of weeks. We recommend waiting a year to make some decisions. Over the next year always ask yourself, “Do I need to make a decision on this right now, or can it wait until a future date?”
- Take some time for yourself—go for walks, meditate, cry, scream, pray, share memories, sleep, eat healthy, join a support group, journal and just breathe.
- Work with professionals as much as you are comfortable with. Family and friends have the best intentions, but their advice is not always correct or in your best interest.
- Maintain a list of chores, errands and other items that need to be taken care of, and when friends or family offer to help, ask them if they could help with something on the list.
- Gather important documents, develop a filing system, keep a journal and a calendar to keep track of important dates and follow-ups.
  - ▶ Will and trust
  - ▶ Investment statements
  - ▶ Bank statements
  - ▶ Life insurance policies
  - ▶ Birth certificate
  - ▶ Marriage license
  - ▶ Death certificate
  - ▶ Spouse’s former employer benefits
  - ▶ Tax return
  - ▶ Military discharge papers
  - ▶ Auto titles
  - ▶ Mortgage paperwork/ Deed
  - ▶ Loan documents
  - ▶ Credit card statements
  - ▶ List of user name and passwords
- Send thank-you notes.
- Notify Social Security. Normally, the funeral home will take care of this for you—if not, visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or call 800-722-1213.
- Bank Accounts
  - ▶ Leave your spouse’s name on your joint account(s) and all bank accounts open for at least one year.
  - ▶ Review checking account to list expenses—this will help in preparing your budget.
    - ACH
    - Paid by check
    - Paid by credit card
- Insurance
  - ▶ Review your health care coverage
  - ▶ Review your home, auto and umbrella policies
  - ▶ Locate any life insurance policies. Notify them to start the claims process
  - ▶ Locate any long-term care policies. Notify them to cancel coverage

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- Spouse's Former Employer
  - ▶ Pension
  - ▶ Retirement plan
  - ▶ Health benefits
  - ▶ Life insurance
- Notify utilities to have spouse's name removed or replaced with yours.
- Spouse's Personal Accounts
  - ▶ Cancel driver's license, email and social media accounts
  - ▶ Notify organizations, fraternities and other memberships
  - ▶ Cancel credit cards held in their name only
- Request a copy of spouse's credit report and request the following notation be listed on their credit report—"Deceased - do not issue credit."  
Contact:
  - ▶ Equifax 888-548-7878
  - ▶ Experian 877-322-8228
  - ▶ TransUnion 800-916-8800
- Investment and Retirement Accounts—Make sure to seek advice before making any changes.
  - ▶ Change ownership if needed
  - ▶ Change beneficiaries
- If you have a child in college, contact the financial aid office. Your child may be eligible for special assistance or increased financial aid.
- If your spouse had interest or was part owner of any business, make sure to contact an attorney.

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## MOVING FORWARD WITH YOUR GOALS

- Review your investments, retirement plans, life insurance and bank accounts to make sure they reflect your needs and goals.
- Establish an emergency fund.
- Develop a budget.
- Update estate planning documents: will, trust, power of attorney for financial and health.
- Align and update your financial plan with your personal values.
- Update all titles and deeds.

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## KEY CONTACTS

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Funeral Home

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Attorney

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CPA or Tax Preparer

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Financial Advisor

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Insurance Agent

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Bank/Credit Union

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Former Employer Contact

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Mortgage Company

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Other

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Other



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