



# SURVIVING SPOUSE FINANCIAL CHECKLIST

Nothing can prepare you for losing your spouse. In addition to the emotional hardships, there are also legal decisions, financial pressures, and memorial arrangements to deal with. This checklist includes step-by-step instructions designed to help organize and prioritize these financial, legal and logistical challenges after losing a spouse.

## PREPARATION PHASE

### GET HELP

Dealing with the many steps ahead can be daunting. Enlist the help of a close friend or family member, as well as professionals, including your financial advisor, attorney, and accountant.

### GET ORGANIZED

Gather the following documents in a central, easily accessible location:

- Will/Trust
- Life Insurance Policy
- Birth Certificate
- Death Certificate (12 copies)
- Funeral Arrangements
- Social Security Card
- Tax Returns
- Divorce Agreements
- Bank Statements
- Investment Account Statements
- Stock Certificates
- Pensions/Retirement Plans
- Loan Statements
- Mortgages Leases
- Deeds
- Motor Vehicle Titles
- Car Insurance
- Homeowner's Insurance
- Bills
- Safe Deposit Box and Key
- Storage Locker Contract
- Business Ownership/Interest
- Military Service Records
- Computer Records related to Assets

## FIRST STEPS

- Contact the funeral home for preparation and payment information.
- Contact your spouse's employer. Have them provide you with any paperwork that needs to be completed, as well as medical insurance options if you or your children were covered through your spouse's employer.
- Contact an attorney. Review your spouse's will and discuss how the probate process will work. Your attorney will file the will with the court and help execute the will throughout the process.
- Put bills in your name and contact creditors about delaying payments if you are not able to pay the bills immediately.

- Contact your spouse's credit unions and bank accounts to change the account holder information.
- Contact your financial advisor to begin assigning assets to beneficiaries.
- If an active life insurance policy was in place, contact the provider.
- Contact all other providers of insurance policies (auto, credit card, homeowners, etc.) to change the name on the policies.
- Change designation on your will, insurance policies, bank accounts or retirement plans if your spouse was listed as a beneficiary.
- Contact any creditors to close accounts and remove your spouse's name from joint accounts.
- Update the name on deeds and titles, such as on homes or vehicles. Contact your state's Department of Motor Vehicles for vehicle title changes.
- If your spouse was in the military, contact Veteran's Administration to see what benefits might be due.
- If your spouse belonged to a labor union, contact the union to see if they can offer any assistance.
- If an illness and medical care preceded your spouse's passing, file a claim for medical bills through your spouse's health insurance provider.
- Contact a tax professional to assist you with taxes.
- If your child is in college, contact their financial aid office as you may qualify for more assistance.
- Cancel memberships to clubs or organizations in your spouse's name.
- If your spouse had business ownerships, contact the business attorney who handled their business affairs to learn about handling any transitions. Contact any business clients your spouse may have been working with.
- Check with your spouse's former employers to see if they have any life insurance policies, pensions or 401(k) plans in your spouse's name.
- Contact the Social Security Administration regarding spousal and survivor benefits
- Send a letter to each of the three major credit bureaus to get your spouse's credit reports to ensure you are aware of all existing debts. Request that the following notation be listed on the credit report: "Deceased – Do not issue."

**EQUIFAX**

Equifax Information Services PPC  
Office of Consumer Affairs  
P.O. Box 105169  
Atlanta, GA 30348

**EXPERIAN**

P.O. Box 9701  
Allen, TX 75013

**TRANSUNION (TU)**

P.O. Box 6790  
Fullerton, CA 92834

- Complete new spending and savings plans.
- Consult with financial advisor to put large amounts of money to work towards your new goals.
- Reassess your retirement plans. Estimate how your expenses and income will change after retiring.