

Financial Planning for Women

Survivors checklist - In the unfortunate event of losing a spouse

The death of a spouse is one of the most devastating events of a person's life. Survivors must cope with more than grief; they also have to deal with crucial financial matters.

This can be particularly stressful if the surviving spouse is the wife, and she did not play an active role in the household finances. No one wants to think about a day like that, but being prepared will give you and your family peace of mind to mourn without getting caught up in the logistic processes of death.

This *Survivors checklist* will assist you in the difficult days, weeks and months after your spouse's death.

Some of the arrangements will have to be done by the Executor of the estate and others can be done by family or friends.

Please remember that this information is just a guide, and not all of the details will apply in your case. Contact Ascor® to discuss your individual circumstances. We will assist you in drawing up a Will (if you don't already have a Will) and complete an Estate directory, which is a comprehensive document that contains all the relevant information about you and your spouse.

1. Report and register the death	Check
Contact the family doctor or hospital about obtaining the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death.	
Contact a Funeral director to transport the deceased from the place of death (if death did not occur at hospital) to the nearest State Mortuary. The deceased will have to be formally identified at the mortuary prior to the release of the body to the funeral Director.	
The Births & Deaths Registration Act requires that a person's death be reported to Department of Home affairs or SA Police Service members as soon as the family gets a medical certificate from the doctor.	
Complete the form BI-1663, Notification of Death when reporting the death. <i>The following people have to complete different sections of the form:</i> Person reporting the death, Medical practitioner, Home affairs officer or member of SA Police.	
The Register of Births & Death will give you a Death Report (Form BI-1680) that will be issued after the death has been registered, together with a burial order (Form BI-14)	
The department of Home Affairs will issue a death certificate on receipt of the Notification of death and the Death Report together with an abridge death certificate on the same day (BI-132) of registration of death.	
The Executor needs several copies (20) of the Death Certificate stamped and certified by a Commissioner of Oaths. Every instruction given and transaction one on behalf of the deceased will need to be accompanied by a certified copy of the death certificate.	
2. Planning the Funeral	Check
The funeral should be planned around the preferred wishes of the deceased, stipulated in his/her will. The responsibility for funeral arrangements and determining the deceased last resting place normal falls on the closest next of kin or the persons named as heirs in the deceased's will	
If the deceased was religious, one should contact the deceased's place of worship to find out what funeral services they offer.	
A reputable Funeral director will do everything from obtaining the death notice and certificate, supplying one with the original and the necessary certified copies, organising death notices in newspapers, to cemetery or crematorium arrangements, catering and florist arrangements, printing of hymn sheets, etc.	
<i>What to take with you to the Funeral Parlour</i> A copy of the deceased's ID; Next of kin's ID, Funeral Policy and marriage certificate, A photo of deceased for hymn sheets; clothes for the deceased to be dressed in.	
Most funeral parlours require payment upfront. If the deceased had a funeral policy, that should be handed over to the Funeral director for him to verify.	

3. People who need to be informed	Check
All family members and friends should be notified about the death	
Notify the deceased's Employer	
The deceased's Will should have information about the wishes of the deceased, and the necessary steps should be taken to contact people mentioned in the Will	
4. The Executor and Financial Organisations	Check
The Executor appointed in the Will should be informed and contacted. If the deceased did not nominate an Executor, the Master of the High Court will appoint an executor	
The Executor needs to obtain the Will and check that it is valid, establish who the beneficiaries are and get an estimate of the assets and liabilities of the Estate	
Banks accounts, title deeds to properties, Insurance policies and any other Financial affairs of the deceased need to be collected.	
If a beneficiary is named in a life assurance policy, the proceeds can be paid directly to that beneficiary without having to go through the Estate. This will provide cash to the dependants while the Estate is being wound up.	
The Executor is responsible for paying off any debts or taxes and distribute the property and possessions to those entitled to them	
5. The Master of the High Court	Check
An Inventory of assets and property should indicate whether the total assets exceed R125000, and a "Acceptance of Trust" form is available at the Master's office and must be completed and signed in duplicate. The Master will forward a copy to South African Revenue Service (SARS)	
The Master of the High court will grant "Letters of Executorship" once the Executor is formally appointed and granted the necessary powers to administer the Estate.	
Letters of Executorship will be needed by banks and insurance companies that may hold assets pertaining to the deceased as proof that the assets they hold will be passed on to the properly authorised representative of the deceased's Estate	
The Estate must be Advertised so that creditors can become aware of the need to claims against the Estate. Advertisement must be placed in the Government Gazette and local Newspapers. Creditors have 30 days to lodge any claims against the Estate	
6. Getting closure and finalising the Estate	Check
The Executor will check the deceased's bank account in order to find what monthly payments are being made. Pay up and close all these accounts e.g. Credit cards, petrol cards, gym membership, DSTV, clothing accounts etc.	
The Executor will close the deceased bank account and open a current account called "Estate Late" followed by the deceased's name. All investments will be paid into this account and all creditors and beneficiaries will be paid from this account.	
The Executor prepares the "Liquidation and Distribution Account" (L&D account) this can take from 6 weeks to 6 months depending on the size of the Estate. The L&D account includes all the assets and liabilities in the Estate at the date of death, also the income and expenditure incurred by the Estate.	
Depending on the size of the Estate, Capital Gains Tax payment can be triggered. An expert Tax consultant is required to perform the calculation. The Executor submits the L&D account to the Master of the High Court, and the final tax return to SARS at the same time.	
Once the Master of the High Court has given approval, the account must be advertised in the Government Gazette and in a local newspaper and made available for inspection for 21 days at the Master's office and the Magistrates office in the district.	
The heirs should have the opportunity to review the account before it is finally submitted to the Master.	

7. Distributing and signing of the Estate

Check

If no objections are lodged against the L&D account, the Master will confirm that the Executor may distribute the assets to the beneficiaries	
SARS has to release the estate and this will only be done once SARS is satisfied that all outstanding taxes have been paid.	
Creditors must be paid before the residue of the estate can be distributed among heirs.	
After the account has been advertised, the Executor prepares a cash statement and distributes the assets to the heirs. It takes an average of eight months to three years to finalise an Estate.	
The Executor will also arrange for transfer of fixed properties like a house that was in the deceased's name.	
Once the Executor has provided the Master with proof that all the creditors have been paid and the assets have been distributed, the Master signs off the Estate and the Executor's task is complete.	