

Preliminary Steps in Settling an Estate

- Locate Will and review to determine whether there are any special funeral directions.
- Meet with the family.
- Assist in making funeral arrangements, if necessary.
- Ascertain whereabouts of beneficiaries.
- Determine immediate cash requirements of beneficiaries.
- Obtain funeral director's statement of death or apply for provincial death certificate.
- List contents of safety deposit box.
- Arrange for safe custody of valuables.
- If deceased lived in a rental property, terminate lease or arrange sublet.
- Determine entitlement to and apply for Canada Pension Plan Death Benefits, Survivor's Benefits and Orphan's Benefits.
- Notify Health and Welfare to cancel Old Age Security cheques and Canada Pension Plan payments.
- Notify previous employer and determine any Survivor Pension benefits or insurance proceeds.
- Cancel driver's licence, magazine and newspaper subscriptions, cable television, club memberships and telephone, and request refunds, if applicable.
- Cancel health insurance coverage.
- Confirm outstanding balances and cancel credit cards.
- Request Canada Post to re-route deceased's mail, if necessary.
- Complete or cancel any outstanding securities trade orders.
- Ascertain assets and liabilities by writing to financial institutions, insurance companies, brokers, employers, and RSP/RIF Trustees.
- Obtain prior years' tax returns. Prepare and file any T1 returns for previous years.
- Locate and obtain title documents for real property, mortgages, share certificates, bonds, debentures, and Guaranteed Investment Certificates.
- Arrange valuations of real estate, securities, personal property and automobiles.

Preliminary Steps (continued)

- Review adequacy of insurance coverage and alter, if necessary.
- Arrange for a review of the investment portfolio.
- Consult with an estate lawyer regarding probate procedures, notice to beneficiaries and all other preliminary administrative matters.
- Provide a copy of the Will to each beneficiary.
- Open an estate bank account.
- Redirect all securities income to the estate account.
- Prepare an inventory of all assets and liabilities of the estate.
- Establish reporting, communication process and frequency.
- Apply for grant of probate or administration.
- Review Will and determine the division of estate assets. Consult with beneficiaries regarding form of distribution (distribution in cash or in kind), where appropriate.
- Review with an estates specialist any time periods or restrictions imposed on distribution of estate, e.g. family law considerations or claims/litigation.
- Report to beneficiaries on progress of administration.
- Arrange for publication of Advertisement for Creditors prior to distribution of estate assets.
- Ask estate lawyer to register probate on title to real estate, if necessary.
- Close safety deposit box and take possession of contents.
- Complete all documentation required to transfer securities.
- Close bank accounts and transfer balance to estate bank account. If joint accounts, with right of survivorship, provide financial institution with death certificate and request transfer to surviving joint tenant.
- Settle all claims and debts.
- Initiate re-registration and transfer of securities, or arrange for sale of securities if converting to cash.

Preliminary Steps (continued)

- Arrange for disposal/transfer of personal effects to beneficiaries and obtain receipts.
- Pay legacies to beneficiaries and obtain receipts.
- Prepare and file necessary estate tax returns for foreign assets, if any.
- Prepare and file Terminal T1 Tax Return and other returns with the Canada Revenue Agency and request Tax Clearance Certificate.
- Arrange rollover or transfer of RSP/RIF proceeds.
- If Will provides for outright distribution, transfer assets or funds to beneficiaries. Retain sufficient funds as a reserve for income taxes, administration expenses and any outstanding accounts.
- If Will provides for trusts, set up testamentary trusts and arrange for ongoing review of the investments, and ongoing compliance with the rest of the terms of the trust, e.g. payment of income.
- Arrange for delivery of securities to beneficiaries, if distribution in kind.
- Prepare and file T3 Trust Information Return.
- Obtain Goods and Services Tax Clearance.
- Prepare accounts for passing or approval by beneficiaries, if required.
- Calculate Executor's compensation.
- After obtaining approval from the beneficiaries or the Court, charge Executor's compensation, maintain holdback/reserve pending receipt of necessary tax clearance certificates, and distribute any remaining funds or deliver assets.
- Ensure Tax Clearance Certificate received.
- Write to beneficiaries with final report on all aspects of administration.

Note: Estate administration practice and requirements may vary by province or territory. The information in this checklist is for informational purposes and is not exhaustive. It is intended only as a guide to assist in administering an estate and should not be considered as income tax or legal advice.