



REAL ESTATE SERVICES

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SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE CHECKLIST

When a loved one passes away, it is normal to feel overwhelmed by the high volume of pragmatic matters that must be addressed. Remember that your loved one chose you as their Successor Trustee because they trusted you to carry out their wishes. You can do this!

Because of the many responsibilities you have as a Successor Trustee, it can be helpful to use a checklist to ensure that all tasks are completed. **Everything does not need to be done at once!** This step-by-step checklist will help you track common tasks that often must be done after a Settlor dies.

Note: This list does NOT include the detailed steps of administering a Trust. That information can be obtained when you retain an experienced Estate Planning attorney. This information is intended solely for the purpose of education and should not be construed in any way to represent an attorney-client relationship between Richard T. Woods, Attorney at Law, and the reader.

TASKS TO START RIGHT AWAY:

Notify the following people/entities of the death:

- The decedent's Estate Planning attorney
- The decedent's friends, family members, and employer/employees
- The decedent's landlord (if any)
- The decedent's telephone, cable, and utilities services
- The post office (arrange to collect the decedent's mail)
- The home insurance company (update the coverage if the home is now unoccupied)
- The automobile insurance company (update the insurance as needed)

- Notify the funeral home of the death and ensure that burial instructions are followed. Ask them to notify the Social Security office to stop benefits and obtain any death benefit available. Work with them to request copies of the death certificate.
- Arrange for the care of any minor children, elderly people, or pets who depended on the decedent for care.
- Re-key the locks on the decedent's home. (This prevents anyone who may have a key from entering and removing property.)
- Make arrangements for the funeral/memorial service.
- Place an obituary notice in the newspaper if desired.
- If the decedent owned a business, decide if the business will continue to operate or be liquidated. Obtain records from the attorney who handled the corporate books, if applicable.
- Determine if you need to contact any Veteran, pension, or government entities.
- Notify credit agencies of the death to prevent identity theft.

NOTE ON CASH FUNDS: Immediately after a death, cash may not be easily accessible. You may need to pay certain expenses on the decedent's behalf, such as paying for the funeral or paying the decedent's bills. Once you have a Certification of Trust naming you as Successor Trustee and a death certificate, you can access estate accounts and reimburse yourself. You should receive the death certificates a few weeks after making the request.

TASKS TO START AS SOON AS TIME PERMITS:

- Locate the decedent's Trust and/or original Will.
- Retain an experienced Trust attorney to assist with the Trust Administration (if there was a Trust) and possibly Probate (if any assets were left outside of the Trust).
- Retain a CPA to assist with filing tax returns on the decedent's estate.
- Locate asset and account information by reviewing the decedent's records and files.
- When death certificates arrive, use them and the Certification of Trust to take control of Trust accounts.
- If there is a safety deposit box, locate the key and inventory the contents of the box.
- Locate all insurance policies. Contact each one and request paperwork to make claims on any death benefits.
- Determine any debts owed by the decedent.
- Collect all personal property and either distribute it according to the Trust or arrange to sell it as appropriate.
- If necessary, determine which assets should be sold to pay for the estate administration costs and taxes owed. If real property needs to be sold, arrange for an appraisal and retain a realtor.
- Determine if there were any legal actions pending on behalf of the decedent, or if the estate has an action for wrongful death of the decedent.

Conclusion: Serving as a Successor Trustee is a time-intensive, often thankless task. You deserve support as you work to fulfill this challenging role. Please feel free to contact the Law