Collecting Paperwork

The first step is to collect the necessary papers in order to file for various benefits and to finalize the estate:

- *Copies of the death certificate*: You will need to give copies of the death certificate to many of the offices or agencies you contact. You can purchase certified copies of the death certificate through your funeral director or directly from the county Health Department. There will be a charge of $25 per certificate. You may save money by using a photocopy when possible, but many companies will require a certified copy. For most circumstances, you will want 10-12 copies initially, but you may need more later.
- *Copies of insurance policies*: These documents may be stored in a safe deposit box or with the personal belongings of the deceased.
- *Social Security numbers of the deceased, the spouse, and any dependent children*. The Social Security number for the deceased can be found on the death certificate.
- *Copy of a certificate of honorable (or other than dishonorable) discharge if the deceased was a veteran*. Write or submit an online form with the Department of Defense's National Personnel Record Center, 1 Archives Drive St. Louis, MO 63138, if you cannot find a copy of the discharge. You can find more information here about the SF -180 form.
- *Copies of a marriage certificate if the spouse of the deceased will be applying for benefits*. Copies are available at the Office of the County Clerk where the marriage license was issued.
- *Copies of birth certificates for dependent children*: Copies are available at either the State or County Public Health offices where the child was born.
- *A copy of the will*: The lawyer of the deceased may have the will, or it may be in a safe deposit box or with the personal belongs of the deceased.
- *A complete list of all property*, including real estate, stocks, bonds, savings accounts, and personal property of the deceased. Land titles, stock certificates and other financial papers may be stored in a safe deposit box or other secure place.

Revision #1
Created 2025-12-31 20:13:40 PST by zaneabi
Updated 2025-12-31 20:14:01 PST by zaneabi