

Business Matters

Taking over financial matters may be a new experience for you. But there are a number of things that should be taken care of within the next six months. Following are some items that you should address:

Taxes

If the death in your family was that of your spouse, federal law requires that an estate tax return be filed within nine months of the death in many cases. Since tax laws change each year, it would be wise to consult an expert to assist with this.

Social Security

Depending on the circumstances, you may be eligible for death benefits. Call the Social Security Administration for details and also ask about eligibility for Medicare. The local office is located at 605 N. Arrowhead Ave., Suite 101, in San Bernardino, and the phone number is 866-331-7132.

Insurance

You will want to contact your insurance agent or your employer for help in processing life insurance claims.

Property

Probate can be a long and complex process, so the advice of a lawyer will be most helpful. In most cases, the court will not allow probate to be closed before one year, so some financial resources may be unavailable for a time.

Your Home

People may try to convince you to move to another home right away following the death in your family. This may be tempting because there are so many memories

triggered by being in your home. However, many people actually find comfort by being in familiar surroundings where they have memories of their loved one who died. A decision to move should be made carefully over time. Don't let anyone rush you into a decision that you will regret at a later date. If you need to, find someone to stay with you in your home; or you may want to stay with friends or relatives for awhile. Allow some time to pass before making any major decisions.

Bank and Retirement Accounts

It would be wise to change names on all accounts as soon as possible. A copy of the death certificate will be required.

Death Certificate

The death certificate is not a legal document until it has been certified by the Hall of Records in San Bernardino, California. Certified copies of the death certificate are needed for changing names on bank accounts, processing life insurance claims, changing the title on your home and obtaining death benefits from Social Security. The mortuary you choose will assist you in obtaining the certified copies that you will need for legal purposes.

Veteran's Benefits

If your loved one who died was a veteran, it is important to contact the Department of Veterans' Affairs at 844-698-2311.