

The First Week After a Death

A gentle, practical guide for when you can barely think straight.

When someone you love dies, the world keeps moving even when you can't. There are things that need to happen in the first few days — not because they're more important than your grief, but because some of them are time-sensitive. This checklist is meant to help you handle what has to be handled first. Take it one item at a time. Ask for help.

First 24 Hours

Only the most immediate things.

- Notify immediate family and close friends** — You don't have to tell everyone today
- Secure the home** — Lock up, check on pets, adjust thermostat
- Locate key documents if possible** — Will, trust, insurance policies, safe deposit box keys

Days 2-3

Start gathering information.

- Find the will or last instructions** — Check with their attorney, home files, or safe deposit box
- Contact an estate attorney if needed** — Especially if there's property, debts, or no will
- Notify their employer** — Ask about final pay, life insurance, and retirement benefits
- Begin requesting death certificates** — You'll need 10-15 certified copies — the funeral home can help order them

Days 4-7

Handle the administrative necessities.

- Arrange funeral or memorial** — Follow their wishes if known — this can also wait if you need time
- Draft an obituary if desired** — The funeral home can help, or write it yourself when ready
- Notify their bank and financial institutions** — Freeze accounts to prevent unauthorized access

- Contact Social Security** — Report the death and ask about survivor benefits
- Notify their insurance companies** — Life, health, auto, homeowners — start the claims process

Notes

Need more help organizing your transition?

Lumeway offers step-by-step worksheets, planning checklists, and a free Transition Navigator to help you understand what comes next — one step at a time.

Visit lumeway.co

This checklist is a free organizational resource from Lumeway. It does not constitute legal, financial, or medical advice. Consult a licensed professional for guidance specific to your situation.

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