



MEMORIAL MERITS

Sanctuary, not sales floor.

What to Do When Someone Dies

The first 24 hours, one page

You do not have to do all of this today. Work down the list. Stop when you need to. Turn this page over for what can wait.

STEP 1. Get the death pronounced

- ☐ At home with hospice: call the hospice nurse, not 911
- ☐ At home without hospice: call 911
- ☐ In a hospital or care facility: staff handles this
- ☐ Unexpected or in public: 911, and a medical examiner may review

STEP 2. Tell immediate family

- ☐ Spouse or partner, children, parents, siblings
- ☐ Name one person as the central contact and let them make the rest of the calls
- ☐ Keep the first calls short. Details can come later.

STEP 3. Understand that you have time

- ☐ You are not required to call a funeral home immediately
- ☐ The hospital or facility can hold your person for hours, not minutes
- ☐ You choose where they go, and that choice usually commits you to that provider
- ☐ Do not authorize transport until you have decided

STEP 4. Secure the home

- ☐ Lock up. Secure valuables, medications, and financial papers.
- ☐ Arrange care for any pets today
- ☐ Clear perishable food if the home will sit empty

STEP 5. Find the essential documents

- ☐ Photo ID and Social Security number
- ☐ Will, trust, or written funeral wishes
- ☐ Insurance policies (life, burial, final expense)
- ☐ DD-214 if they served. That document is what qualifies them for veteran burial benefits.

STEP 6. Answer two time sensitive questions

- ☐ Is an autopsy legally required, or are you being offered one
- ☐ Were they a registered organ donor. Donation costs the family nothing and does not prevent an open casket.

STEP 7. Notify only who needs to know today

- ☐ Employer, closest friends, clergy, landlord
- ☐ Social Security, banks, credit cards, and subscriptions can all wait days

STEP 8. Hand out specific jobs

- ☐ When someone asks how they can help, give them a task
- ☐ "Can you call these five people?" "Can you pick up my sister from the airport?"

STEP 9. Eat, drink, sleep if you can

- ☐ Take your own regular medications
- ☐ Shock, numbness, and not being able to think straight are all normal

Pronouncement or emergency
Call 911

Crisis support, any hour
Call or text 988

Crisis text line
Text HELLO to 741741

What does not need to happen today

Give yourself permission to leave every one of these for another day.

- ☐ Complete funeral planning. Basic decisions are enough for now.
- ☐ Writing or publishing an obituary
- ☐ Closing bank accounts or canceling credit cards
- ☐ Sorting through belongings or clearing the residence
- ☐ Notifying every person and organization
- ☐ Any decision you cannot undo
- ☐ Having the answers figured out

You only need to handle today's essentials today. Everything else can wait.

If you are worried about paying for this

You do not have to solve this today. When you are ready, most families look at these two in this order.

1. Start a free memorial fundraiser. It costs the family nothing, it gives people who keep asking how they can help something real to do, and money can start arriving before the first bill does. Scan the code, or go to memorialmerits.com/fundraiser

2. If you still need to borrow, compare an outside lender before you sign a funeral home's own financing. Loans through the Upstart lending platform run \$1,000 to \$75,000. Checking a rate does not affect your credit score. memorialmerits.com/upstartfinancial



Scan to start a
free fundraiser

Write it down before you forget it

Funeral home or provider chosen: _____

Their phone number: _____

Family point person coordinating: _____

Their phone number: _____

Attorney, if there is one: _____

The longer version, when you have a minute

This card covers the first day. The full guide walks through each step in detail, plus what comes on day two: the death certificates you will need, how funeral pricing actually works and what you are allowed to refuse, and how to compare providers without leaving the house.

memorialmerits.com/what-to-do-when-someone-dies-first-24-hours-checklist



Scan to read

Free to print, share, and distribute. Hospices, hospitals, funeral homes, and chaplains are welcome to hand this out.

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