

First 30 Days After a Death in Pennsylvania

A compassionate guide to the immediate legal and practical steps

We understand this is an incredibly difficult time. This guide provides a clear, week-by-week outline of the most important steps so you can focus on what matters most — your family.

WEEK 1: IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- Obtain death certificate (request 10–15 certified copies)
- Locate the original will and estate planning documents
- Notify immediate family members and close friends
- Secure the decedent's home, vehicles, and valuables
- Contact the decedent's employer regarding benefits
- Notify the Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Contact the decedent's insurance agent (life, health, auto)

WEEKS 3–4: NOTIFICATIONS & ADMINISTRATION

- Publish estate notice in newspaper and county legal journal
- Send written notice to known beneficiaries and creditors
- Redirect the decedent's mail to executor or estate address
- Cancel or transfer utilities, subscriptions, and memberships
- Review and maintain insurance coverage on estate property
- Begin organizing financial records for tax filings
- File claims for life insurance, retirement, or veterans benefits

WEEK 2: LEGAL & FINANCIAL STEPS

- Consult an attorney about probate and estate administration
- File the will with the Register of Wills
- Apply for Letters Testamentary or Letters of Administration
- Obtain an EIN from the IRS for the estate (Form SS-4)
- Open an estate bank account
- Notify banks, investment firms, and credit card companies
- Begin gathering asset and liability information

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ✗ Distributing assets before debts and taxes are settled
- ✗ Paying the decedent's personal bills from your own funds
- ✗ Closing accounts before obtaining proper documentation
- ✗ Discarding financial records, mail, or documents
- ✗ Making major real property decisions before consulting an attorney

Questions? We can help.

Call (724) 733-3500 or visit ament.law to schedule a free consultation.
Flat-fee probate services. No hourly billing surprises.