



First Steps to Take When a Loved One Dies with a Will

When a loved one who had a will passes away, there are several important initial steps to take. These steps will help you begin the process of settling their estate and ensuring their wishes are carried out.

Here are the initial steps to take when a loved one dies with a will:

- Notify the Relevant Parties:**
 - Inform family members and close friends about the passing of your loved one.
 - If the person had a lawyer or financial advisor, contact them to let them know about the death.

- Obtain the Death Certificate:**
 - Obtain multiple copies of the death certificate from the appropriate authorities. You will need these for various legal and financial purposes.

- Locate and Secure the Will:**
 - Find the deceased person's original will. It may be kept in a safe, with their attorney, or in another secure location. Make sure it is protected and in a safe place.

- Notify the Executor:**
 - If you are not the named executor in the will, contact the person who is named as the executor to inform them of the death. They will be responsible for managing the estate.

- Arrange for Funeral and Burial:**
 - Make arrangements for the funeral or memorial service, and for the burial or cremation. The will may contain specific instructions regarding funeral and burial wishes.

- Identify and Secure Assets:**
 - Identify and secure the deceased person's assets, including bank accounts, investments, real estate, and personal property. These assets may need to be managed during the estate settlement process.

- Notify Financial Institutions:**
 - Contact banks, investment firms, and other financial institutions to inform them of the death. They will typically freeze the accounts until the estate is settled.

- Consult an Attorney:**
 - Consult an attorney who specializes in estate planning and probate to guide you through the legal process. The attorney can help with probate proceedings, distribution of assets, and addressing any legal issues that may arise.

- Read and Understand the Will:**
 - Carefully read and understand the contents of the will. It will outline the deceased person's wishes for asset distribution and the appointment of the executor.

- Inventory and Appraise Assets:**
 - Create an inventory of the deceased person's assets, including their value. Some assets may need to be appraised professionally.

- Notify Creditors:**
 - Notify creditors of the death. The estate may be responsible for settling outstanding debts and obligations.

- File for Probate:**

•If required by state law, file the will for probate with the local probate court. The court will oversee the distribution of assets according to the will and state laws.



Attend to Tax Matters:

- Address any tax-related issues, including filing final income tax returns and potentially paying estate taxes if applicable.
- Consult with a CPA if you need assistance with tax-related issues.



Distribute Assets:

- After all legal and financial matters have been resolved, distribute the assets to the beneficiaries as outlined in the will.
- This may involve transferring property from the deceased person to the named beneficiaries. Consult an attorney if you need assistance transferring assets.



Keep Detailed Records:

- Maintain accurate records of all financial transactions, communications, and actions related to estate settlement.



Close and Settle the Estate:

- Once all legal and financial matters have been resolved and assets have been distributed to the beneficiaries, the estate can be officially closed.

These are the initial steps to take when a loved one with a will passes away. The process of settling an estate can be complex, and it's important to work with professionals, such as an attorney and an accountant, to ensure that all legal and financial matters are handled correctly. Additionally, open communication with family members and beneficiaries is crucial to prevent disputes and misunderstandings during the estate settlement process.

Please reach out to Williams Law Office, PC if you have questions about what to do after a loved one passes away with a will, or you need assistance with settling an estate.

Prepared by Lora N.R. Williams, Attorney at Law, Lora@WilliamsLawOffice.com

Williams Law Office, PC, PO Box 43, Greensburg, IN 47240, (812) 663-7601