

# After a Loved One Dies: A Gentle Guide for Families

At Beacon of Hope, we understand this is an overwhelming and sacred time. This checklist is offered with care to support you through the many steps ahead, helping to organize practical matters while honoring your grief and love.

## What to Do Immediately After Death

- Obtain a legal pronouncement of death (from hospice, hospital, or coroner).
- Notify close family and loved ones gently, in an order that feels right to your family.
- If death occurred at home without hospice, call emergency services for official pronouncement.
- Secure the body with dignity and contact your chosen funeral home or cremation provider.
- Look for any written funeral or memorial wishes or plans from your loved one.

## Caring for Home, Family, and Pets

- Arrange immediate care for children, elders, pets, and ensure home security.
- Collect mail, tend to plants, and safeguard valuables or important belongings.
- Inform your loved one's employer, if applicable.

## Planning Funeral or Memorial Services

- Review any prepaid or pre-arranged funeral plans.
- Coordinate service type—burial, cremation, or other wishes—and select a date and location.
- Consider cultural or faith traditions in planning services that honor your loved one's journey.

## **Important Legal and Financial Tasks**

- Obtain multiple official copies (6-10) of the death certificate for various agencies and institutions.
- Locate your loved one's will, trusts, and important documents.
- Notify the executor or personal representative responsible for handling the estate.
- Contact an estate attorney to guide probate or other legal processes if needed.
- Notify banks, insurance companies, Social Security, Veterans Affairs, and pension providers.
- Manage ongoing bill payments and secure financial accounts.
- Forward mail and cancel subscriptions and memberships as appropriate.

## **Caring for Personal Belongings and Digital Life**

- Make an inventory of assets: bank accounts, property, investments, and valuables.
- Document treasured items with photos for estate purposes.
- Secure and memorialize digital accounts and passwords thoughtfully.

## **Emotional Support and Family Communication**

- Seek grief counseling or support groups when you or family members need comfort.
- Hold family meetings to share updates, delegate tasks, and offer mutual support.
- Allow space for grieving and honoring your loved one's memory.

## **Ongoing Steps**

- Organize distribution of belongings per the will or family wishes.
- Prepare final tax documents and manage outstanding debts.
- Maintain records of actions and communications related to the estate process.
- Continue to support one another with patience and kindness.