

## Beneficiary Guide

# Helping you navigate through a difficult time

---

**Part I: People  
to contact** **3**

Family attorney	3
Your life insurance representative	5
Trust officer	6
Deceased's employer	8
Your accountant	8

**Part II: Organizations  
to contact** **9**

Social Security	9
Deceased's member organizations	9
Veteran's Administration	10
Civil Service Commission	10

**Part III: Papers  
and documents  
you may need** **11****Part IV: Beneficiary  
checklist** **12****Part V: Sample letters** **13**

# Introduction

**For more than a century, we've provided our policyholders and their families with quality customer service and financial security. We've earned the trust and faith of millions of people nationwide. People who have come to rely on us for innovative products and financial strength. People like you.**

At this time, you are faced with many difficult decisions. To help make your task a little easier, we've developed this Beneficiary Guide, a handy reference designed to answer many of the questions you may have. It describes the various individuals and organizations you should contact, and how they can help you. You'll discover which documents you need and find sample letters for your use. We hope this information will be helpful to you.



## Commitment

We're standing by you; especially now, when you need us most.

Losing someone you care about is never easy. We want you to know that our commitment to serving you doesn't end with a claim form. Now, more than ever, we want to provide you with the best service possible.

**Our commitment to serving you is a lasting one.**

---

# Part I: People to contact

## Your family attorney

### Legal advice

One of the most important – and most helpful – individuals you should contact is your family attorney.

You'll need legal advice on such things as wills, recording property deeds, disposition of stocks, bonds, savings accounts or business assets, and handling the disbursement or conservation of the deceased's estate. Your attorney can help you avoid any complications and give you the professional support you need.

If you don't have a family attorney, contact your local bar association. They can recommend expert legal service for you.

If you haven't already done so, ask your attorney about drawing up your own will. A will describes how you want your property – both real and personal – distributed after your death. Without a will, your wishes might not be carried out. For example, any of your property that's not passed on by a contractual agreement stating your wishes will be distributed according to state law.

### Trusts

Your attorney can also help you set up a trust, which can provide for you or your children's future. A trust is a legal agreement in which you direct a 'trustee' to perform certain management or financial duties.

### Federal estate taxes

Your attorney can also give you expert advice on federal estate taxes. Tax laws can change periodically, so it's a good idea to make sure you're up-to-date on how they affect you. Changes in federal tax laws can have an affect on you – so be sure you contact your attorney for the latest information.

### State inheritance taxes

Your attorney can also give you legal advice on state inheritance taxes and how they affect you. Not all states have estate taxes. Many states have a so-called 'pick up' state death tax, which is tied to your federal estate tax and is equal to the maximum credit the federal government allows you for the estate taxes paid to your state. The result is that your total federal and state death taxes are not increased, but some of the tax that would have been paid to the federal government is in effect diverted and paid to the state. A few states have a higher inheritance or state death tax. These vary from state to state. The percentage rates and exemptions for these local taxes are based on your relationship to the deceased.

Depending on where you live, state death taxes could take a sizable amount of an estate. So it's important that you have a clear understanding of what's involved. Again, your attorney can help answer any questions you may have.

## Probate

To most people, it conjures up visions of a long, drawn-out process. According to probate judges, however, that's just not true in most cases.

Your attorney or personal representative of the estate can be very helpful in explaining the probate process to you. Probate is designed to make sure that all of the deceased's property is collected, that all debts and taxes are paid, and that everyone who is entitled to receive a portion of the estate receives it. Delays in probate can occur when the estate is very large, when there's lawsuit involving creditors, or if the estate is initiated as a result of an accidental death

The probate court may publish a notice in the local papers notifying creditors that they have three months from the published date to present claims of all debts incurred before death. The attorney will probably advise the personal representative not to pay any claims until the three months are up, unless there are sufficient funds in the estate to pay all claims and expenses. Ordinarily, any medical or funeral bills, or local taxes can be paid at once. These bills take precedence over any other claims.

If an estate is small, in some states the court may authorize immediate transfer of the items once you've shown that the funeral bills have been paid.

### **If an estate has to go through probate, your attorney or personal representative will need the following information:**

1. The deceased's full name and date of death to obtain certified copies of the death certificate.
2. A copy of the marriage certificate (or date and place of marriage). If the deceased was married previously, you should provide this information as well.
3. The names and addresses of any children.
4. A will, if one exists.
5. Your best knowledge of the deceased's assets.

(Remember, assets don't include life insurance that's payable to beneficiaries). The probate estate is then closed. This can be completed 30 days after death, since the law provides a 30-day-from-death waiting period before the court can take such action.

**This is just a description of a typical probate procedure. These procedures vary from state to state. Your attorney can give you advice regarding the laws that govern probate in your particular state.**

# Your life insurance representative/ financial professional

Another individual who can be very helpful to you is your life insurance representative/financial professional. You may need help processing your claim, determining the most appropriate settlement option to meet your needs, or advice on how to contact other insurance companies that may be involved. (See Part V for sample letters.)

## Processing your claim

**To make sure your benefit claim is processed as quickly as possible, you will probably have to supply each insurance company with the following items:**

1. A completed Beneficiary Claim Form filled out by the person(s) to whom the proceeds are payable.
2. A copy of the certified death certificate.
3. Proof of account (voided check or safety deposit slip) – necessary only if you would like the benefit paid via direct deposit.

## Paying your claim

Getting the most out of your benefit dollars is important to your future security, especially at this time. That's why life insurance companies offer beneficiaries a choice of settlement options. These options vary depending on the company and product in force.

Unless otherwise specified by the insurance contract, standard payment is typically available through:

- Direct deposit
- Lump-sum check
- Legacy Account

If your life insurance benefit is a large sum (\$10,000 or more), you may need more time to consider the financial options available to you. That's why you may elect your life insurance benefit to be paid to you in the form of your own personal Legacy Account.

## More about Legacy Account

Legacy Account is an interest-bearing account established to give a beneficiary immediate access to the proceeds of a benefit, such as a life insurance claim.<sup>1</sup> The account can provide the precious gift of time – so you can focus on what matters most now and make decisions on how to best use your claim payment later when you're ready.

Your money will be safe and secure until you're able to make decisions about how to use the funds. Please note, the Legacy Account is only available if you are receiving proceeds of \$10,000 or more.

When you establish a Legacy Account with your insurance proceeds, you can be confident knowing that:

You earn interest	You can access your funds anytime	Your funds are secure	There are no standard fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Competitive interest rate</li><li>• Interest is earned immediately and accrued daily</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online</li><li>• By phone</li><li>• By drafts (similar to writing a check)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funds are held within the Securian Financial General Account</li><li>• Funds can remain in the account for any length of time</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No monthly service or maintenance fees</li><li>• No charges for withdrawals</li></ul>

The General Account is not FDIC insured but is backed by Securian Financial's financial strength and claims-paying ability. For more information about our financial strength and ratings visit [securian.com/strength](http://securian.com/strength) and [securian.com/ratings](http://securian.com/ratings).

## How to elect Legacy Account

To elect Legacy Account, all you need to do is select Legacy Account and sign the Beneficiary Statement. A draft book, similar to a check book, and welcome kit will arrive 7-10 days after claim approval. The welcome kit will provide details of how you can access the funds via phone, online or draft.

1. The Legacy Account is an interest-bearing settlement account that allows the beneficiary to access proceeds via drafts. There is no monthly fee for this account, however you may be charged for special services or overdrawing your account. The guaranteed minimum interest rate is 0.05%.

## Trust officer

As mentioned earlier, a trust is a legal agreement in which you direct a trustee to perform certain management or financial duties. This trustee may be an impartial member of a financial organization who can give you professional advice. A trust officer is a financial professional who deals with investments, estate settlements and household finances.

Most state and national banks have trust departments. To set up an appointment with a trust officer, contact your local bank. The trust officer will meet with you to review your total financial needs, including any real estate, cash, personal effects, joint property or life insurance.

If you don't have a will, your trust officer will recommend that you see your attorney as soon as possible. Your trust officer may also suggest that your will include a trust agreement that protects you and your children's financial future. You can also create a living trust for yourself for professional management of your cash, securities, real estate, or other assets.

After your initial meeting, you'll be introduced to a trust administration officer who will assist you in financial matters that involve your trust.

## **Duties of the trustee**

If you've received proceeds from the deceased's estate and have no investment experience, you may wish to set up a living trust to take care of your financial security during your lifetime; to provide for your children's education; or to pass your estate on to your grandchildren if your children die. Trust officers have different qualifications to set up a trust, so be sure you check with the trust department first.

**Depending upon the type of trust and what the trustee is directed to do in the trust document, trustees generally have the following responsibilities:**

1. To invest your funds according to the program you developed with your trust officer.
2. To collect income earned by the investments in the trust.
3. To remit this income to your checking account, or you directly, at regular intervals.
4. To take care of all routine administration involving your investments.
5. To keep accurate records of all your transactions, sending you statements regularly.
6. To keep accurate tax records, sending you a statement of taxable income collected and distributed by the trust, deductions from taxable income, a schedule of short- and long-term capital gains and losses. You'll receive these shortly after the end of the year. You simply transfer the totals from these statements onto your personal income tax return form.

These are descriptions of typical duties. These duties can vary depending on how your trust is set up.

If you become seriously ill, or incapable of handling your personal finances as outlined in the trust, you can authorize the trustee to pay your hospital or medical bills, rent, taxes, utilities and other household expenses.

Depending on the type of trust you set up, you may be able to change the provisions of your trust at any time.

## **Fees**

The fees for trust services are set by the service level and the trust organization. You can obtain a published schedule from the trust officer.

## Deceased's employer

Another important person you should contact is the deceased's employer. You and your family may be beneficiaries of a company life insurance policy or still be eligible for medical or disability benefits. Be sure to ask the employer about any pension fund contributions, accrued vacation or sick pay, unpaid commissions, credit union balance, or service awards. (See Part V on page 13 for sample letters.)

## Your accountant

If you have an accountant, he or she probably knows a lot about the deceased's finances and is an important person to contact now. For example, your accountant may be aware of business arrangements the deceased made, so you will want to ask about such arrangements. Your accountant may have access to tax records, a financial balance sheet, important affidavits and other records that also may be helpful to you.

If you don't have an accountant, you probably will want to contact one soon to learn how this death will affect your tax status. And, if the deceased generally handled all of your tax matters, you will definitely want to seek the assistance of an accountant.



# Part II: Organizations to contact

## Social Security

One of the most important organizations you should contact is your local Social Security Office.

If the deceased was covered by Social Security, you may be eligible for a lump-sum death benefit – but you must apply within a specified period in order to receive it.

Usually, the funeral director contacts the local Social Security office. You should, however, make an appointment with the Social Security office as soon as possible. This will allow the Social Security personnel plenty of time to review the deceased's file and gather any additional information.

**You can save valuable time by bringing the following information to your meeting:**

1. A certified copy of the death certificate.
2. The deceased's Social Security number.
3. The deceased's approximate earnings during the year of death.
4. A record of actual earnings from the previous year (W-2 form or copy of tax returns).
5. Marriage certificate (if applicable).
6. Social Security numbers for you and your children.
7. Proof of your age and your children's ages (birth certificates, baptism certificates or school records if applicable).

Although these items are vitally important, don't wait until you've located all of them before you apply for benefits. If you're having trouble finding the material, your Social Security representative can help you select alternate forms of verification.

### **Railroad workers benefits**

If the deceased was employed with the railroads for 10 years or more, Railroad Retirement, rather than Social Security, provides the benefits. Your Social Security representative can give you any information you'll need. You must apply for these benefits.

## Deceased's member organizations

If the deceased was a member of a union, service organization, professional or trade association, fraternity/sorority or auto club, you should contact them and see if you and your children are eligible for benefits. Besides group life insurance, pension plans and medical benefits, these types of organizations may have credit unions, return unused portions of annual dues or establish special funds for members and their survivors.

## Veteran's Administration

If the deceased was ever in the Armed Forces, another important organization you should contact is your regional Veteran's Administration (VA) office.

Most Veterans' Administration benefits will differ depending on whether or not death was service related. The funeral director will normally contact the VA for you. You're usually eligible for a reimbursement for burial expense and an American flag for the casket. Burial in a national cemetery is usually also provided, including the grave site, interment and a marker. Even if the deceased isn't buried in a national cemetery, a headstone is shipped to the grave site free of charge.

If your funeral director hasn't contacted the VA, you should get in touch with your regional office as soon as possible (Eastern U.S.: 500 Wissahickon Ave., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19010; Western U.S.: Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55111).

You'll need to provide the VA with the deceased's complete name and government life insurance policy number. If you don't know this number, you can supply the 'c' (claim) number, military service serial number, the branch and dates of military service or a copy of the discharge papers. If necessary, the VA can help you secure these documents from the Department of Defense.

### Necessary documents

To help you, the VA will need:

- A copy of the death certificate.
- A copy of the marriage certificate.
- Copies of the children's birth certificates, if minors.

The VA provides informational brochures regarding their benefits. Please contact your regional VA office for more information.

## Civil Service Commission

If the deceased was in Federal Civil Service, you and your children may be eligible for certain benefits, including group life insurance, pension plan or medical benefits.

When you apply for benefits, be sure to include a certified copy of the death certificate. You can apply for benefits at any federal agency or the Civil Service Bureau of Retirement, Insurance and Occupational Health (Civil Service Commission: 1900 E. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20415). You may be asked to supply additional information that is not on record.

State and local governments also offer certain employee benefits for which you and your children may be eligible. For more information, contact your local agencies.

# Part III: Papers and documents you may need

## Important documents

One of the most important documents you'll have to obtain is the death certificate. You'll need several certified copies: for filing claims with insurance companies; for Social Security; (e.g., for the Veteran's Administration).

In most cases, the funeral director can obtain these documents for you. Still, you should have extra copies on hand. You can purchase additional copies for a nominal fee from the office of the Registrar of Vital Statistics in the city where death occurred.

### Searching for documents

Most documents are stored in safe-deposit boxes, briefcases, strong boxes, home and office desks, lockers, safes and other 'secured' areas. Be on the lookout for:

- The will
- Insurance policies
  - Life
  - Accident and sickness
  - Health
  - General
- Business agreements
- Bankbooks
- Stocks/bonds or certificates
- Notes receivable/notes payable
- Security certificates
- Real estate deeds
- Income tax returns
- W-2 form
- Social Security number
- Marriage/birth certificates
- Military discharge papers
- Veterans' administration claim number
- Automobile registration
- Installment payment books
- Letter of administration/guardianship

**Caution:** The documents you will need depend on your relationship to the deceased (e.g., named beneficiary, assignee, trustee). Don't throw out any 'official-looking' documents such as insurance policies – even if you think the policy is canceled. Some policies continue to provide benefits even though premiums aren't currently being paid. This arrangement is stated in the policy.

### Gather all current bills

Installment loans, service contracts and credit cards may be covered by credit life insurance, which pays off the account balance if the customer dies. It's possible that your financed automobile or credit card debt will become fully paid. So, it's important that you contact all companies where the deceased had an account.

### Joint accounts

You should also contact each bank or savings and loan where you and the deceased had joint accounts. A release must be made before funds can be withdrawn from those accounts.

A bank will seal the deceased's safe-deposit box and may freeze any checking or savings accounts after the death announcement is published.

For any jointly held assets, you should change the title of that asset and any applicable insurance.

Clearing title to your automobile is handled differently in each state. You should contact your local Motor Vehicle Department for more information.

# Part IV: Beneficiary checklist

This checklist outlines the individuals and organizations you should contact and the documents you'll need. For more information on these items, read all of the Beneficiary Guide.

## (Check when completed)

### People I may need to contact

- ☐ Family attorney
- ☐ Life insurance representative
- ☐ Trust officer
- ☐ Deceased's employer
- ☐ Accountant

### Organizations I may need to contact

- ☐ Social Security Administration
- ☐ Veteran's Administration
- ☐ Civil Service Commission
- ☐ Deceased's member organizations

### Papers and documents I may need

- ☐ Death certificate
- ☐ Birth certificate
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Will and trust agreements
- ☐ Letter of administration/guardianship
- ☐ Current bills

**Note:** You may need several copies of all but your current bills.

## Part IV: Sample letters

### Sample letter to life insurance company

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This is to inform you that \_\_\_\_\_ **(name of deceased)** died on **(date, month, year)**.  
Please send me the necessary instructions to complete a claim under policy number(s)

\_\_\_\_\_.

I wish to exercise my right as beneficiary to elect settlement options.

Please search your files for any other coverage that **(name of deceased)** may have had. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

### Sample letter to local Social Security Administration

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ **(name of funeral home)** has informed you that  
\_\_\_\_\_ **(full name of deceased)** **(Social Security number of deceased)**  
died on **(date, month, year)**. I would like to schedule an appointment with your  
representative on **(give a preferred date and time, morning or afternoon, and two  
alternate dates and times)**.

I have secured copies of the death certificate, our marriage certificate, our birth  
certificates and those of our dependent children, our Social Security numbers, and  
evidence showing

\_\_\_\_\_ **(name of deceased)** 's recent earnings. If you require any additional  
information or documents, please let me know once you've set an appointment date.  
Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

## Sample letter to Veteran's Administration

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ **(name of funeral home)** has informed you that \_\_\_\_\_ **(name of deceased)** died on \_\_\_\_\_ **(date, month, year)**. I would like to schedule an appointment with your representative on \_\_\_\_\_ **(give a preferred date and time, morning or afternoon and two alternate dates and times)**. \_\_\_\_\_ **(name of deceased)**'s Government life insurance policy number is \_\_\_\_\_. The military service serial number is \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ **(name of deceased)** served in the U.S. \_\_\_\_\_ **(branch)** from **(year)** to **(year)**.

If you require any additional documents or information, please inform me once you've set an appointment date. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

## Sample letter to deceased's employer

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As you are aware, my \_\_\_\_\_ **(your relationship to deceased)**, \_\_\_\_\_ **(full name of deceased)**, died on \_\_\_\_\_ **(date, month, year)**.

I would appreciate it if you would send me any information on such fringe benefits as group life insurance coverage, pension funds, accrued vacation or sick pay, terminal pay allowances, gratuity payments, service recognition awards, unpaid commissions, disability pay, credit union balance, etc.

Please send me a list of whatever documents you need and the necessary forms I should complete as beneficiary. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

## Sample letter to deceased's member organizations

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This is to inform you that my \_\_\_\_\_ **(your relationship to deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_,  
**(full name of deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_, died on (date, month, year).

I understand that he/she may have been covered by a life insurance policy through your organization. Please send me a list of whatever documents you need or forms I should complete as beneficiary. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

## Sample letter to companies

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This is to inform you that my \_\_\_\_\_ **(your relationship to deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_,  
**(full name of deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_, died on (date, month, year).

I understand that he/she may have been covered by a life insurance policy through your organization. Please send me a list of whatever documents you need or forms I should complete as beneficiary. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

## Sample letter to companies

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This is to inform you that my \_\_\_\_\_ **(your relationship to deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_,  
**(full name of deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_, died on (date, month, year).

I understand that my **(your relationship to deceased)** \_\_\_\_\_'s loan may have been covered by a credit life insurance policy offered through your company. If so, please contact me as soon as possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**(Your signature)**

**(Your full name and address)**

**(Your telephone number)**

The Legacy Account is an interest-bearing settlement account that allows the beneficiary to access proceeds via drafts. There is no monthly fee for this account, however you may be charged for special services or overdrawing your account. The guaranteed minimum interest rate is 0.05%.

This information is a general discussion of the relevant federal tax laws provided to promote ideas that may benefit a taxpayer. It is not intended for, nor can it be used by any taxpayer for the purpose of voiding federal tax penalties. Taxpayers should seek the advice of their own advisors regarding any tax and legal issues specific to their situation.

This is a general communication for informational and educational purposes. The information is not designed, or intended, to be applicable to any person's individual circumstances. It should not be considered investment advice, nor does it constitute a recommendation that anyone engage in (or refrain from) a particular course of action. If you are seeking investment advice or recommendations, please contact your financial professional.

Insurance products are issued by Minnesota Life Insurance Company in all states except New York. In New York, products are issued by Securian Life Insurance Company, a New York authorized insurer. Minnesota Life is not an authorized New York insurer and does not do insurance business in New York. Both companies are headquartered in Saint Paul, MN. Product availability and features may vary by state. Each insurer is solely responsible for the financial obligations under the policies or contracts it issues.

Securian Financial is the marketing name for Securian Financial Group, Inc., and its subsidiaries. Minnesota Life Insurance Company and Securian Life Insurance Company are subsidiaries of Securian Financial Group, Inc.



PREPARE  
PROTECT  
SECURE

[securian.com](https://www.securian.com)

400 Robert Street North, St. Paul, MN 55101-2098  
©2015-2025 Securian Financial Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

F30201-10 Rev 4-2025 DOFU 4-2025  
4327720