



A Guide for Beneficiaries



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Your role as a life insurance beneficiary

You have been given this guide because your loved one had a Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual) policy. As a beneficiary you have some important tasks to carry out. In these pages you will find information on the steps you need to take, and the companion brochure — “A Guide to Your Life Insurance Claim” — provides instructions on how to receive the proceeds intended for you.

As the issuer of the policy, MassMutual is committed to providing you with personal assistance. Your financial professional or claims representative will be in close touch to answer your questions and provide support. Please be sure to contact him or her as needed should you require additional information or assistance.

**JUST AS WE'VE ALWAYS STRIVED
TO BE THERE FOR YOUR LOVED
ONE, WE INTEND TO BE THERE
FOR YOU IN THE DIFFICULT DAYS
AHEAD AND BEYOND.**

Time frame checklists

The checklists on these pages will help make it easier for you to remember what tasks you have completed. This is only meant as a guide – not all the items listed may apply to your situation, and you may have other items to add.

As soon as possible after the death

- **Speak with your MassMutual financial professional.**
He or she will be at your service to assist you with filing the claim for the proceeds and can help you with other issues and information.
- **Locate the deceased's Social Security number.**
It will be needed for the death certificate as well as for identification purposes.
- **Locate and review the will.**
Important instructions regarding the deceased's final arrangements may be in the will, so reviewing it before making final arrangements could be helpful.¹
- **Order six or more copies of the death certificate.**
You will need these in order to settle the deceased's estate and to provide proof of death to the insurance company as well as to other agencies that require it. The more complex the estate, the more copies you will need. Request these from the funeral director and/or the county clerk's office.
- **Go through the contents of the safe deposit box, if there is one.**
Safe deposit boxes often store important documents, valuables and instructions, which may be needed at this time. Permission for access will be needed unless you are already authorized.
- **Contact government agencies to inform them of the death. These may include:**
 - **Social Security**
www.ssa.gov
1-800-772-1213
 - **Veterans Affairs**
www.va.gov
1-800-827-1000
- **Locate important documents.**
The documents needed depend on the deceased's situation. Some of the papers that may be required include legal papers, insurance policies, business documents, investment and financial documents, and real estate papers, among others. For a more complete list, see Page 4.
- **Request a copy of the estate plan from the deceased's attorney.**
If deceased did not have an attorney, you may require legal assistance to help settle the estate.

¹ For more information, see Probate section on Page 5.

Within the next few weeks

- **Advise creditors, such as banks and credit card companies, of the death.**
- **Apply for survivor benefits from organizations.**

You may be entitled to money or other benefits from organizations such as unions, Social Security, trade associations, and others. In order to receive benefits you will need to complete certain forms, available from these organizations, and have documentation such as the death certificate and the deceased's Social Security number at hand.
- **Contact the deceased's current and former employers' human resources department.**

There may be benefits from life insurance, retirement funds, and profit sharing, for example.
- **Contact an accountant or tax professional.**

Certain taxes may need to be paid and/or papers filed for the tax year. These may include:

 - Federal estate tax
 - State death taxes
 - State inheritance taxes
 - Federal and state income taxes
- **Notify the post office.**
- **Notify those who had a business or personal relationship with the deceased.**

For example:

 - Eye doctor
 - Dentist
 - Health insurance provider
 - Specialists
 - Pharmacy (make sure recurring mail order prescription deliveries are stopped)
 - Magazines
 - Health club/recreational club
 - Volunteer organizations
 - Automobile club
- **Contact email and other online resources.**

Deactivate social networking accounts and contact online payment systems, such as PayPal. Remember to check photo storage sites that may have irreplaceable photo libraries.

Documents that may be needed

Here is a list of the documents (and other items) that you may need to provide, or refer to, in order to settle the deceased's estate. You may need additional or fewer documents depending on the complexity of the estate and the situation.

Document checklist

Legal documents and personal papers

- Address book
- Birth certificate
- Cemetery plot deed
- Child custody/ adoption papers
- Citizenship papers
- Death certificate
- Divorce/separation papers
- Driver's license
- Last will and testament
- Marriage certificate
- Organ donation card
- Passport
- Tax returns
- Trust agreements

Insurance policies

- Automobile
- Disability
- Health
- Homeowner's
- Life
- Long-term care
- Medical

Investment documents

- Additional securities
- Appraisals of valuables
- Bonds
- Brokerage accounts
- Collectibles
- Investment records
- Mutual funds
- Stock certificates

Business papers

- Buy/sell agreements
- Cross-purchase agreements
- Employment contracts
- Split-dollar arrangements

Retirement papers

- 401(k)
- Annuity contract
- IRA
- Keogh plan
- Pension plan
- Social Security

Real estate/property/debt

- Credit cards
- Home deed
- Loans
- Other property deeds (second home/ rental property)

Banking information

- Account statements
- Certificates of deposit (CDs)
- Checking and savings account numbers
- Safe deposit box

Miscellaneous

- Burial instructions
- Membership papers
- Safe deposit box key
- Safe keys/combination
- Special bequests

Understanding probate

Probate can refer to the act of presenting a last will and testament to the court for filing purposes, often referred to as “probating the will.” Probate also refers to the method by which the deceased’s estate is administered and processed through the courts. Depending on the size and complexity of the estate, you may need to seek legal assistance.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Does all property have to go through the probate process?

A: No, most states have a certain amount of property that can pass free of probate.

Q: In what state is the probate process initiated?

A: It is initiated in the state of the decedent’s legal residence at time of death.

Q: Who is responsible for probating the will?

A: The executor/executrix named in the will is responsible.

Q: What if there is no will?

A: If there is no will, the person is deemed to have died intestate – without a will. If this occurs, an executor/executrix must be appointed by the court.

Q: Do I need a certified copy of the death certificate to start the probate process?

A: Yes.

Q: How do I begin the probate process?

A: After receipt of the certified copy of the death certificate, the executor will initiate a Petition for Probating the Will and Appointment of Executor at the probate court clerk’s office in the state/country in which the person died.

Note: Probate court is a division of the state court legal system and could be referred to by another name depending on where you live.

Q: Do I need a lawyer to begin this process?

A: A lawyer is not required to begin the process.



Q: What happens once I request the petition for probate?

A: There are several steps that occur:

1. A date will be set by the probate court for the executor or administrator to appear before a judge, present the will and ask to be formally appointed.
2. The will's validity is established and the court issues an order "admitting the will to probate," which is recorded in the county clerk records.
3. The will becomes public record along with all subsequent filings with the court.
4. The probate judge will officially appoint the executor (or administrator), giving that person full authority to deal with the decedent's probate property and accounts.

Probate duties

Once a person has been appointed through the probate process, certain duties have to be completed on behalf of the deceased:

1. Collection, inventory, and appraisal of all assets that are subject to probate.
2. Payment of bills – taxes, estate expenses, and creditors of the decedent.
3. Formal transfer of estate property according to the will or by intestacy laws (no will).
4. Final accounting.



Next steps

The grieving process can take a long time, and having to attend to tasks while grieving may feel overwhelming. During this time it's wise not to make any decisions, financial or otherwise, in haste.

When you feel ready, you may want to start thinking about your current and future financial situation. Though you should not rush into any decisions, try to take some time to assess your personal circumstances so that you can prepare for the years ahead and protect your loved ones.

A MassMutual financial professional is always available to help you with your plan. Your loved one chose MassMutual to assist with his or her financial strategies, and we will continue to be here to provide assistance to you.

Over the next few months

- **Calculate your cash-flow needs.**
Make sure you have enough for the basics, including mortgage, utility, food and medical expenses.
- **Make a complete statement of your net worth.**
This will help you identify what you have and what you owe, giving you a better understanding of how you'll meet short- and long-term spending needs.
- **Review your will, or make one if you haven't yet.**
- **Think about what you want in place for your own future and for your loved ones, and how you plan to prepare.**

Glossary of terms you may encounter

For more information, consult your legal adviser or financial professional.

Beneficiary: A person or other legal entity that receives assets – including but not limited to money from someone else.

Estate: The sum of an individual’s assets at a given point in time.

Executor: The person or institution named by an individual creating a will to carry out his or her wishes as specified in the will.

Grantor: A legal term that refers to a person who is creating a trust. This person can also be referred to as a “settlor” or “trustor.”

Guardian: An individual appointed by a court, and often named in a will, to take care of a child in the event of the death of that child’s parents.

Health Care Proxy: A legal document that designates the individual you want to make health care decisions for you in the event that you are unable to make those decisions yourself.

Irrevocable Trust: A trust that, once drafted and signed by the grantor, is **not** changeable and gives the grantor little to no control over the trust. If done correctly, placement of assets in an irrevocable trust results in their removal from the grantor’s estate.

Living Will: A legal document that specifies the medical care you want or don’t want under a specified set of circumstances.

Power of Attorney: A legal document that provides written authorization to an individual to act on behalf of another individual in legal, financial and, possibly, medical matters.

Probate: The legal process of administering the estate of a deceased person by resolving all claims and distributing the deceased person’s property under a valid will.

Revocable Trust: A trust where, during the life of the grantor, the terms of the trust may be changed and assets may be added or withdrawn by the grantor. With a revocable trust, trust assets remain in the estate of the grantor.

Successor Trustee: The person or institution designated to administer a trust according to its terms after the death, resignation or incapacity of the original trustee.

Trust: A legal tool through which property is held for the benefit of another person.

Trustee: The person or institution designated to administer a trust according to its terms.

Will: A legal document by which a person provides for the transfer of property at his or her death and names an executor to carry out the transfer.

There are many reasons to choose a life insurance company to help meet your financial needs: protection for your family or business, products to provide supplemental income and the confidence of knowing you will be prepared for the future.

At Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual), we operate for the benefit of our participating policyowners. We stand strong in the fundamental belief that every secure future begins with a good decision. And when choosing a life insurance company — ownership, strength and stability matter.

Learn more at www.massmutual.com/mutuality



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