



Life in Mind

Navigating suicide bereavement



About this resource

This resource contains key information to support you in the weeks following a sudden and unexpected death of a family member, friend or loved one, including a death by suicide.

It is recommended that this information is used in conjunction with advice from health professionals and other services, and lists of helpful contacts are located throughout this resource.

What to do in the first 24 hours

The deceased person's body will be taken to a forensic medical centre and within the first 48 hours the coroner will usually decide whether an autopsy needs to be performed. If you want to object to an autopsy, contact the coroner's office immediately. The police or coroner's officer may get in touch to ask you to identify the person, or they may ask you to provide more information about the person's medical history or the circumstances of the death.

If you are having a funeral

It can be worth getting a few quotes from different funeral companies, and asking friends or family for help with this if you don't feel up to it. The costs of a funeral vary greatly, and starting costs are often around \$5,000. Your solicitor or the executor of the estate can confirm if funeral costs have been prepaid. If not, you can ask to pay the funeral company in instalments, and you can also use the Centrelink bereavement payment (if eligible) to assist with costs.

For more information on funerals, check the Australian Funeral Directors Association.

Understanding the coronial process

When there is a sudden and unexpected death and a death certificate cannot be issued, the coroner will investigate the cause of death. While the involvement of the Coroner's Court may seem overwhelming at first, it can be a useful service to utilise for any questions you may have, and to receive other support as you navigate the coronial process.

Coroner's offices in each state

State/Territory	Phone
<u>ACT Coroner's Office</u>	02 6256 7777
<u>NSW State Coroner's Office</u>	02 8584 7777
<u>Vic State Coroner's Office</u>	03 9684 4380 or 1300 309 519



<u>Tas Coronial Division</u>	03 6233 3257 or 03 6233 6202
<u>NT Office of the Coroner</u>	Darwin: 08 8999 7770 Alice Springs: 08 8951 5796
<u>WA Coronial Investigation Unit</u>	08 9420 5200
<u>Qld State Coroner's Office</u>	1300 304 605 or 07 3247 5860
<u>SA State Coroner's Office</u>	08 8204 0600

The Coroner's Court has specialist counsellors who contact the next of kin after a suicide has been reported to the coroner. They can offer short term counselling, support to people exposed to a traumatic death, and referrals to other agencies for assistance. The *Life in Mind* portal also contains a list of national crisis services that can provide free, 24/7 crisis support.

**If you or someone you know is in immediate danger,
please call 000 or visit your nearest hospital.**

National crisis support services

www.lifeline.org.au	13 11 14
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au	1300 659 467
www.beyondblue.org.au	1300 224 636
www.kidshelpline.com.au	1800 55 1800
www.mensline.org.au	1300 78 99 78
www.griefline.org.au	1300 845 745
www.qlife.org.au	1800 184 527



www.openarms.gov.au

1800 011 046

www.1800respect.org.au

1800 737 732

Navigating an inquest/inquiry and obtaining a death certificate

A coroner may request an inquest (a court hearing to determine the cause of death) or an inquiry (a review of the police report to make a finding on the death). Only a small percentage of deaths reported to the Coroner proceed to inquest. On completion of the inquest or inquiry, the coroner will forward their findings to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and a death certificate can be purchased. An interim death certificate (omitting the cause of death) can be purchased if required earlier.

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

State/Territory	Phone
ACT Access Canberra	02 6207 0460
NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages	1300 655 236
Vic Births, Deaths and Marriages	03 9613 5839 or 03 9603 5856
Tas Births, Deaths and Marriages	1300 135 513
NT Births, Deaths and Marriages	08 8999 6119
WA Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages	08 9264 1555
Qld Births, Deaths Marriages and Divorces	1300 366 430 or 07 3247 9201
SA Births, Deaths and Marriages	08 8204 9599

Administering an estate

When a person dies leaving a will, there are procedures that must be followed by the executor before the estate can be distributed. In most cases, the executor will apply for a grant of probate from the Probate Division of the Supreme Court. If there is no will, your solicitor can provide advice about managing the estate and the Public Trustee may be able to act as executor. An example of the process to follow if someone dies without a will is available via Law Access.



If you are an executor or next of kin, it can be helpful to take copies of all important documents to a lawyer for advice on next steps, as well as a list of questions regarding legal costs and payment methods. Relevant documents may include: The will, the death certificate, bank account statements, unpaid utility bills or rent, car/boat registration papers, information on shares and property, funeral invoice, insurance policies.

It can often take around six months to administer the estate, which may involve valuing the estate; completing tax returns; paying debts and collecting monies owed; and distributing assets. If you do not feel able to undertake the role of executor, you can nominate another person or request that someone support you.

Legal Aid

State/Territory	Phone
Legal Aid ACT	1300 654 314
NSW Legal Aid	1300 888 529
Victoria Legal Aid	03 9269 0120 or 1800 677 402
Tasmania Legal Aid	1300 336 611
NT Legal Aid Commission	08 8999 3000
Legal Aid WA	1300 650 579
Legal Aid Queensland	07 4889 8600
Legal Services Commission SA	1300 366 424

Seeking financial assistance

Depending on your relationship to the deceased and your circumstances, you may be eligible for Government financial assistance. Payments include Bereavement Allowance, Bereavement Payment, Widow Allowance, Pension Bonus, Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance. Contact Centrelink on 13 28 50 or www.centrelink.gov.au for more information.

Claiming money from life insurance policies

ASIC holds money from life insurance policies from insurance companies or friendly societies that have been unclaimed for seven years after the policy matures. If you are aware of being owed money from a life insurer or friendly society, contact the



relevant institution as they are responsible for assessing the fund's rightful owner. If your claim is successful, the institution will notify ASIC. ASIC will then release the funds to the institution so the institution can then pay you.

People and organisations that should be notified

While there are no legal rules on who must be notified about a death, it is generally recommended that the following people are notified: the deceased's partner/spouse; adult children; guardians/ carers of the underage children; parents of the deceased; other relatives; friends; the deceased's workplace. If you do not know the contact details or it is too emotionally difficult, call on family members or even the police for support in having these difficult conversations.

The following list of organisations to notify following a death may be helpful as a starting point: Australian Taxation Office; banks; Centrelink; school/Tafe/university; child support services; Department of Veterans' Affairs; the person's employer; Australian Electoral Commission; funeral insurance providers; landlord; local council; Medicare; NSW Trustee & Guardian; Transport for NSW; superannuation fund; utilities providers; Australia Post; email and social media platforms e.g. Facebook.

Important contact numbers

Centrelink (national): 13 28 50

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): 13 14 50





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