

While you are at the hospital...

- Identify someone, potentially outside of your immediate family, who can serve as your contact person to make and receive calls on your behalf. Ask them to call family and friends to notify them of the death, and let them know if they should come to the hospital.
- If you are affiliated with a religious organization you may want to notify your religious leader about the death. Feel free to ask them to come to the hospital or meet you at your home later.
- If medically suitable, or if your loved one has already made the decision, information about organ and/or tissue donation will be shared with you. Many families benefit from organ, tissue and/or eye donation. Within the next few hours you may receive a call from a representative of Carolina Donor Services or The North Carolina Eye Bank to discuss your loved one's wishes.
- Decide which funeral home to use and sign the necessary form to allow the hospital to release your loved one to that funeral home. (The hospital will notify the funeral home.)
- Decide if an autopsy is to be performed. If so, sign the permission form. Under certain circumstances, the decision for an autopsy may be made by the Medical Examiner. Usually, this will not delay the funeral.
- Gather your loved one's personal belongings that are at the hospital.
- Coordinate housing for yourself or any incoming family.

When you go home...

- Decide on the type of service you may want and where it will be held. Options include: visitation, funeral at your place of worship or at the cemetery chapel, memorial service, gravesite service, wake, Shiva, etc.

You will also need to decide between open or closed casket; and gravesite burial, vault or cremation.

- Make an appointment with the funeral home of your choice. While you are speaking with the funeral director, find out the deadline for the newspaper obituary, if you so desire.
- Gather the following items to take with you to the funeral home:
 - o Full clothing for your loved one, except shoes. Make sure to include undergarments and dentures, if applicable.
 - o Information for the newspaper obituary (if a photograph is to be used with the obituary, take it with you and label the back).
 - o Military discharge papers, if appropriate.
 - o Any pre-need arrangements.
- Notify family and friends of the arrangements.
- If appropriate, contact fraternal organizations to coordinate their involvement.
- Have someone spend the first night or so with you.
- Locate health/life insurance policies.
- Obtain information regarding cash on hand. For example, savings and checking account information, spending money, etc.
- Appoint someone to keep records of food, calls, and visits at the home. Ask them to be sure and label all food containers for return. Be sure someone is at the home at all times, especially during the visitation and the funeral.

At the Funeral Home...

- If pre-need arrangements have been made you will need to go over your plans with the Funeral Director. If not, be prepared to select and buy a casket, gravesite and/or urn, and sign contracts for the above. Regardless, you will set the time and place for all services.

- Inform the funeral director if you want flowers. If you prefer, donations may be made to a favorite charity in honor of your loved one.
- Give the Funeral Director the information you have prepared for the newspaper obituary, including the labeled photograph if one is to be used. If you want the photograph returned, confirm that arrangement. (You may wish to ask that your address be withheld from the public notice.)
- Request a few extra copies of the certified death certificate.
- If you do not own a gravesite, be prepared to buy one. If you already have a gravesite, notify your Funeral Director.
- Be prepared to pay for the opening and closing of the grave prior to the graveside service. (You will usually be required to pay with cash or a check.)
- If you desire cremation, this can be arranged through your local funeral home. Safe-keeping or scattering of the ashes is at your discretion.

After the funeral...

- Check with Social Security about benefits.
- File claims for life insurance.
- Re-establish bank accounts and safe-deposit box in the appropriate name. Call before going to the bank to be sure you have the necessary papers to make these changes. It may be desirable to have a co-signature on all accounts. If so, make arrangements with the person of your choice.
- Contact the Clerk of Superior Court in the county where you reside for information regarding paperwork you will need to file.
- Check with the Internal Revenue Service regarding the paperwork you will need to file with your next tax return.

In your grief...

The following books may be helpful to you during this time of grief, loss and change:

- *Coping with Widowhood*
by Frances Caldwell Durland
- *A Grief Observed*
by C.S. Lewis
- *Joy Beyond Grief*
by Colena M. Anderson
- *In Memoriam*
by Henri Nouwen
- *Widow*
by Lynn Caine
- *The Mourning Song*
by Joyce Landorf
- *You and Your Grief*
by Edgar N. Jackson
- *He's Not Dead, He's Just Away*
by Norman Vincent Peale
- *A Survival Handbook for Widows – AARP*
by Ruth Jean Leowinsohn
- *Living with Death and Dying*
by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross
- *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
by H.S. Kushner

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Family Decisions...

When Someone You Love Dies

The time surrounding the death of a loved one is filled with a sense of numbness and anxiety. Yet, many decisions must be made at this most stressful time.

Others who have experienced the challenge of making crucial decisions during extreme grief have compiled this brochure as a guide. We hope this material will be helpful to you in making these important decisions during your time of loss and grief.