HONORLY

Estate Settlement *Guide*

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What's inside

A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

Two years ago, I lost my older brother Charlie. What came alongside the grief, the court paperwork, the insurance claims, the bank accounts, the bills, the passwords nobody could find, was something no one had prepared me for.

> *The hardest months of my life were made harder by a system that forces grieving families to become administrators overnight.*

I wanted to spend those months honoring Charlie. Instead, I spent them on hold.

So I built Honorly, the support system I wish had existed. A dedicated guide who handles the calls, the paperwork, and the coordination. Who checks in every week. Who carries what they can, so you don't have to.

We can't take away grief. But we can carry some of what grief asks of you, so you can focus on what actually matters.

If you found us in the middle of your own hardest months, I'm glad you did. We'd be honored to help.

With care,

Anna Maynard

Anna Maynard

FOUNDER, HONORLY

A few of my favorites.

Anna & Charlie

All five of us

WHERE TO BEGIN

The first days

There's no right way to grieve, and no perfect order to the tasks ahead. Use this guide at your own pace, return to it when you have the bandwidth, skip ahead when you need to, and lean on the people around you in between.

Most families find themselves balancing three priorities at once during the first two weeks: caring for yourselves and one another, protecting your loved one's home and belongings, and gathering the documents everything else depends on. The sections that follow walk through each, in plain language, with the details that quietly matter most.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF FIRST

- Surround yourself with people who can simply be present.
- Sleep, eat, and step outside when you can. The work will wait.
- Ask for help, a meal, a returned phone call, a form picked up.
- Seek professional support if it helps. Grief counselors exist precisely for this.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

You don't have to carry the logistics alone.

When you work with Honorly, a real person guides you through everything in this guide, and handles the parts you'd rather not. We coordinate with attorneys, CPAs, and institutions on your behalf, in plain language, with no surprises.

01 Home & personal property

In the first days, the goal is simply to secure what your loved one left behind, their home, their pets, their valuables, so nothing is lost or vulnerable while you focus on the people around you.

SECURE THE HOME

- Make sure all doors, windows, and side entrances are locked; consider changing the locks if keys were shared widely.
- Ask a trusted neighbor to watch the home and collect the mail.
- Remove perishable food; set a few lights on timers if the home will be empty.

CARE FOR PETS

- Arrange immediate care with a family member, friend, or neighbor, and locate vet records and feeding instructions.

INVENTORY VALUABLES

- Walk the home with a second person present, a witness reduces disputes later.
- Photograph items of monetary or sentimental value, room by room, and keep a simple written list.
- Check unconventional spots, freezers, drawers, behind books and picture frames. Documents and cash turn up in surprising places.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

When in doubt, document and wait. Removing items from a home before the estate is settled, even items clearly meant for you, can create legal and family conflicts that take months to resolve.

02 Documents to gather

Almost every task ahead, probate, insurance, bank closures, taxes, depends on having the right documents in hand. You don't need everything before you begin, but the more you locate in the first two weeks, the smoother the rest will be.

IDENTITY & VITAL RECORDS

- Certified copies of the death certificate (request 10 to 15; many institutions need an original).
- Social Security number, birth certificate, marriage license, divorce or name-change records.
- Driver's license, passport, and military discharge papers (DD-214) if applicable.

DIGITAL & ACCESS

- A list of online accounts, any password manager or password list, and recovery phone numbers and emails.

ESTATE PLANNING & FINANCIAL RECORDS

- Will, trust documents, powers of attorney, and healthcare directives.
- Bank, brokerage, and retirement statements; deeds, titles, and loan documents.
- Recent income tax returns (the last three years is a good target), property tax records, and all insurance policies.

PRIORITIZE ESSENTIAL EXPENSES

If you are living in the home, it is generally important to keep utilities, homeowners insurance, mortgage payments (if applicable), and property taxes current. Missing a payment does not usually result in an immediate loss of the home or services, but it can lead to late fees, penalties, or additional complications over time.

While some tasks are time-sensitive, there's no need to have everything gathered at once. Certain bills, subscriptions, and benefits may have deadlines or filing windows, so starting with whatever information you can locate this week can help keep things moving and prevent important items from being missed.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

We help find what you can't.

Our discovery process surfaces accounts, assets, and liabilities families didn't know existed, old retirement accounts, unclaimed property, lapsed subscriptions still charging. We organize everything into a secure vault and return your originals.

03 Notifications & identity protection

Notifying the right institutions does two things at once: it begins closing out accounts, and it protects your loved one's identity, and your family, from fraud at a moment when that risk is unusually high.

NOTIFY IN THE FIRST TWO WEEKS

- Social Security Administration (often handled by the funeral home, confirm notification was submitted). Medicare (Parts A and B) is generally notified automatically through SSA.
- Financial accounts and benefits, including banks, brokerages, pensions, and employer-sponsored benefits.
- Government agencies, including the DMV and VA, if applicable.

NOTIFY WITHIN THE FIRST MONTH

- Health insurers (and Medicare separately), credit card companies, and all insurance carriers.
- Utilities, memberships, and subscription services to limit recurring charges that are no longer needed.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

After-death identity theft is real. Obituaries and public records give bad actors enough to open credit cards or file fraudulent returns in a loved one's name. Notifying early is the best protection.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

Notifications, coordinated for you.

We can prepare and coordinate these notifications on your behalf, helping save time and ensure important organizations are informed.

04 Probate & Trust Administration

Do you need either?

WHAT PROBATE IS, IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Probate is the legal process of formally settling a person's affairs after death. A court appoints someone, usually the executor named in the will, or a close family member if there's no will, to gather assets, pay debts, and distribute what remains to the rightful heirs. For most families it's a sequence of forms, hearings, and waiting periods.

WHAT TRUST ADMINISTRATION IS, IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Trust administration is the process of settling and distributing assets held in a trust after someone passes away. Unlike probate, it is usually handled privately by the successor trustee rather than through the court system. The trustee is responsible for gathering trust assets, paying any applicable debts and expenses, and distributing assets according to the terms of the trust.

DO YOU NEED PROBATE?

- Assets held jointly with right of survivorship pass directly to the surviving owner.
- Accounts with named beneficiaries, life insurance, retirement accounts, payable-on-death accounts, go directly to the beneficiary.
- Assets in a properly funded trust avoid probate, and many states also offer a simplified process for smaller estates.
- Real estate, vehicles, and individually held accounts above the state threshold generally require probate to transfer into an heir's name.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

Probate and trust administration requirements vary significantly by state. Taking the wrong step too early can create delays or complications later. If you're unsure whether probate is required, whether a trust needs to be administered, or what your responsibilities are, Honorly can connect you with a trusted attorney in our network and help coordinate the process from start to finish.

04 Probate & Trust Administration

The process, step by step

- Locate and file the original will with the probate court in the county where your loved one lived.
- Petition to be appointed executor or administrator; the court issues Letters Testamentary or Letters of Administration, your legal credential for the months ahead.
- Consider setting up mail forwarding. It often reveals accounts, bills, and other important information that may not be known yet. Note: mail forwarding requests must typically be completed in person.
- Obtain an Estate EIN from the IRS, then open an estate bank account; all estate income and expenses flow through it.
- Publish notice to creditors if your state requires it, notify known creditors, and file an inventory of assets and debts.
- Pay valid debts in the order state law requires, file final tax returns, then petition for distribution and close the estate.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

Probate, managed end-to-end.

If probate is required, we determine that quickly with a licensed attorney in our network and manage the entire process, filings, hearings, creditor notices, inventories, and the final distribution. We work with a trusted attorney network in every state.

05 Bank accounts & finances

At this stage, you'll begin identifying and gathering your loved one's financial accounts, determining how each account is titled, and understanding what is required to access or transfer the funds.

Not all accounts become part of the estate. Jointly owned accounts, payable-on-death (POD) accounts, transfer-on-death (TOD) accounts, and accounts with named beneficiaries often pass directly to the surviving owner or beneficiary and may not require Letters Testamentary or Letters of Administration or a Small Estate Affidavit. Requirements vary by institution, so it's always worth confirming their specific process.

WHAT TO ASK EACH INSTITUTION

- The account balance as of the date of death.
- Whether the account was jointly owned or had a named beneficiary, POD, or TOD designation.
- What documents are required to transfer or release funds.
- Whether any automatic payments or recurring withdrawals are still active.
- If the account belongs to the estate, how funds can be transferred to the estate account.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

Beneficiary designations and account ownership generally control how assets pass after death. A retirement account that names a beneficiary will typically pass directly to that person, regardless of what a will says. Before distributing significant assets, confirm ownership and beneficiary information with the institution and consult an attorney if needed, distributing incorrectly can create personal liability for an executor or administrator.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

Account discovery, valuations, and transfers.

We help families identify, organize, and transfer financial assets, conducting account discovery, obtaining date-of-death valuations, coordinating with institutions, and helping determine which assets belong to the estate versus those that transfer directly to a joint owner or named beneficiary.

06 Insurance claims

Insurance falls into two categories: policies that may pay benefits to your family, and policies that should be updated or cancelled following a death. Because some claims and elections have filing deadlines, it is helpful to begin identifying policies as early as possible.

POLICIES THAT MAY PAY BENEFITS

- Life insurance policies, including individual, employer-provided, and policies attached to credit cards or mortgages.
- Accidental death policies, mortgage protection policies, and pension survivor benefits.
- Social Security survivor benefits, veterans benefits, and union or association death benefits.
- A one-time $255 Social Security lump-sum death payment may be available to a surviving spouse or, in some cases, an eligible child. It must be claimed within two years.

POLICIES TO NOTIFY AND UPDATE OR CANCEL

- Keep homeowners/renters and auto insurance in force and promptly update the named insured to the estate/representative during administration, then to the heir(s) once the property transfers.
- Notify health, long-term care, dental, vision, and disability insurers and cancel, since these end at death (and ask about any premium refunds owed to the estate).

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

Some benefits have filing deadlines. Pension survivor elections, in particular, can have windows as short as 30 days. If you identify a policy, consider filing the claim as soon as you have a death certificate, you can often provide additional documentation later if needed.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

Claims, filed and followed up.

We help identify policies, prepare claim forms, gather supporting documentation, and follow up with carriers until benefits are paid. We also coordinate with beneficiaries to help ensure no available benefits go unclaimed.

07 Bills, subscriptions & digital accounts

This is often one of the most time-consuming parts of estate settlement. Modern lives involve recurring charges, online accounts, subscriptions, and digital assets that can be easy to overlook. The goal is to identify what is still active, determine what should be preserved, transferred, or cancelled, and prevent unnecessary expenses from continuing.

BILLS TO REVIEW IN THE FIRST MONTH

- Mortgage or rent payments (which generally must continue until the property is sold or transferred) and property taxes.
- Utilities, auto loans, personal loans, student loans, and medical bills.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & DIGITAL ACCOUNTS

- Streaming services, software subscriptions, shopping memberships, phone plans, wifi, and recurring charitable donations.
- Email accounts, which should generally be preserved before closing.
- Cloud storage, photo libraries, and social media accounts, which may be downloaded, memorialized, transferred, or deactivated depending on family preferences.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

Consider keeping email accounts active until estate administration is substantially complete. Password resets, two-factor codes, account notifications, and notices of unknown subscriptions often continue to arrive by email. Many families keep accounts active for six to twelve months.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

We cancel, transfer, and preserve.

We identify recurring charges, coordinate account cancellations and transfers, preserve important digital assets, and help families navigate memorialization and closure options for online accounts.

08 Taxes

Tax obligations do not end with a death, and several new filing requirements may arise during estate administration. Most families will need to address one or more tax filings, and working with a CPA experienced in estate matters is often beneficial.

TAX FILINGS TO PLAN FOR

- Final personal income tax return, covering income earned from January 1 through the date of death.
- Estate income tax return, which may be required if the estate earns above a certain threshold in interest or other income.
- State filings, including state income tax, inheritance tax, or estate tax returns, depending on state requirements.
- Federal estate tax return for very large estates only.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

Tax requirements vary by estate. They depend on the size of the estate, the types of assets involved, and state law. Gathering financial records early can help avoid missed filings, penalties, and delays.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

Tax filings, coordinated with trusted CPAs.

We help you obtain prior-year tax transcripts, organize financial information, identify potential filing requirements, and coordinate with our CPA partners to help ensure all required returns are prepared and filed on time.

09 Asset distribution & closing the estate

Once debts have been paid, taxes have been addressed, and any required waiting periods have passed, the remaining estate assets can be distributed to beneficiaries and the estate can be formally closed.

BEFORE DISTRIBUTING ASSETS

- Confirm the creditor claims period required by your state has expired.
- Confirm taxes have been filed and paid, or that adequate reserves have been set aside.
- Prepare a written accounting of estate activity for beneficiaries and, if required, the court.

DISTRIBUTING PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- Consider allowing heirs to choose items in rotating turns when appropriate.
- Keep a written record of who receives what.
- Set aside disputed items until emotions have had time to settle and a resolution can be reached.

A NOTE THAT MATTERS

Avoid distributing assets too early. Making distributions before creditor claims, taxes, or other obligations are fully resolved can expose an executor or administrator to personal liability. When in doubt, it is often best to wait, and document the reason for doing so.

HOW HONORLY HELPS

From first inventory to estate closing, one partner.

We support families through the final stages of estate administration, including beneficiary distributions, final accountings, beneficiary receipts, court filings, and the documentation required to formally close the estate.

IF YOU'D LIKE OUR HELP

You don't have to do this alone.

This guide is yours to keep, share, and return to whenever it's useful. We hope it brings clarity to weeks that rarely feel clear, and gives you back a little time. If you'd like a real person walking beside you through any of this, whether that's all of it, or just the part you can't face today, Honorly is here.

WHAT WORKING WITH HONORLY LOOKS LIKE

- A dedicated guide, assigned to your family, who you can call, email, or text.
- Trusted attorneys and CPAs in every state, available without you having to find them.
- A secure document vault for everything that matters.
- Plain-language updates, never legalese.
- Flat-fee pricing. No hourly billing. No surprises.

We'd be honored to help.

Visit honorly.com or reach out anytime. We answer.

Talk to our team

(646) 741-5164 · support@honorly.com

Honorly is not a law firm. We coordinate with licensed estate attorneys as applicable.

HONORLY

Life deserves to be honored.
Not processed.

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