LIFE GOES ON

A Practical Checklist for Executors

When someone passes away, the executor is legally responsible for carrying out their wishes, protecting assets, and managing the estate.

If you have a copy of *Dead Serious About Estate Planning: A Practical Estate Organizer for CAF Members*, use it as your primary reference throughout this process. It contains the key documents, contacts, and instructions you'll need to complete many of the steps below.

This checklist is designed to help you stay organized and calm as you move through the process.

Step 1: Take a Breath and Gather Information

- Locate the original will and any Estate Organizer or personal documents left by the deceased.
- Review the deceased's funeral wishes before making arrangements, and notify their preferred funeral home if one is listed.
- Keep copies of receipts and invoices for funeral costs, as many are reimbursable through benefits or the estate.
- Read the will carefully to understand your duties. You may also need the contact information, date of birth, and SIN of each beneficiary, so locate those details if they are available.
- Request several official death certificates or Funeral Director's Statements of Death (you'll need multiple copies for banks, insurance, and government claims).
- Secure property, valuables, and digital assets to prevent loss or unauthorized access.

Step 2: Notify Key People and Organizations

- **Canadian Armed Forces Pension Centre:** Ask about Survivor Pension, Child Pension, and the Supplementary Death Benefit under the CFSA.
- **Veterans Affairs Canada:** Inquire about the Death Benefit, Income Replacement Benefit, Survivor Pension, and Last Post Fund funeral assistance.
- **SISIP Financial:** Confirm any life insurance or financial planning needs.
- **Financial institutions, Service Canada, CRA, and utility companies:** Notify them and close or transfer accounts as needed.
- **Employer, insurance providers, and associations:** Confirm benefits, claims, or survivor entitlements that may be applicable.

Refer to your SISIP Estate Organizer for key contact information.

Step 3: Open an Estate Bank Account

- Use this account for all incoming and outgoing estate funds.
- Deposit any income (e.g., final pay, insurance proceeds).
- Pay estate expenses (funeral costs, debts, legal fees).
- Keep detailed records of every transaction, as you'll need them for final reporting and tax filing.

Step 4: Manage Assets and Debts

- Review the estate inventory in the SISIP Estate Organizer and update it with any new or missing items such as property, vehicles, or accounts.
- Arrange insurance coverage to protect homes or vehicles until transfer or sale.
- Continue essential payments (utilities, property tax, insurance) to prevent loss.
- Work with the estate lawyer or accountant to pay legitimate debts and file final tax returns.
- Hold back enough funds to cover taxes and any remaining estate costs before making final distributions. A Clearance Certificate from the CRA can help confirm when it is safe to distribute the rest.

About the final tax return:

- You'll need to file the "terminal return," which is the deceased's final personal income tax return covering the period from January 1 of the year of death up to the date of death.
- If the estate earns income after death (for example, investment interest or rent), a T3 Trust Return may also be required.
- Keep copies of all tax filings, notices, and correspondence in the estate file.

Step 5: Distribute the Estate

- Follow the instructions in the will exactly.
- Before distribution, cross-check your final records with the Estate Organizer to ensure every asset and account has been accounted for.
- Obtain signed receipts from beneficiaries for record-keeping.
- Transfer or sell assets as required.
- Keep a small reserve of funds for final expenses or late bills.
- Close the estate account once all obligations are met.

CAF-Specific Reminders:

- Contact VAC for ongoing survivor or dependent benefits.
- If the deceased was a serving CAF member, the CAF may assign a Designated Assistant (DA) to support the family through the administrative process following the death.
- Discuss funeral or commemorative arrangements (Last Post, Legion, military honours).
- Preserve medals and uniforms according to the wishes in the Estate Organizer.

Step 6: Seek Guidance When Needed

- Serving as an executor can feel overwhelming. You do not have to do it alone, and if you are unwilling or unable to act, you may be able to decline the role.
- Reach out to the estate lawyer for legal questions, the accountant for tax filings, and your SISIP advisor for insurance and financial support.
- SISIP advisors are experienced in helping CAF members and their families navigate this process with compassion and clarity.

Final Thought

Carrying out someone's wishes is an important responsibility. Take your time, stay organized, and ask for help when you need it.

SISIP Financial is here to support you throughout the process.