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## INITIAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR A SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE

As Trustee, you are authorized and empowered to carry out all duties and responsibilities to wind up the decedent's affairs and thereafter distribute assets. The Trust, which appoints you as Trustee, gives you authority in that capacity to conduct business on behalf of the estate. Be prepared to demonstrate to third parties with whom you deal that you are in fact authorized and empowered to act.

Use the following checklist as a guide for the first few weeks of administration:

- Remove valuables from the residence and store safely.
- Consider changing locks on any property which has become vacant.
- Obtain 5-10 certified copies of the death certificate from the funeral director or health department. These will be needed for various purposes, and it is best to keep a few extra certified copies on hand.
- Determine immediate cash needs for any beneficiary; identify accounts where cash is available; determine if any immediate expense must be paid. If you pay out of pocket for any funeral, burial or other expense, keep receipts for possible reimbursement.
- Cancel credit cards, charge accounts, and magazine/newspaper subscriptions and ask for refunds, if possible.
- Locate any safe deposit box(es). If you have personal access to a safe deposit box with the decedent, do not remove contents; the box should be inventoried in the presence of a bank officer and only then should contents be removed.
- Gather personal records, including checkbooks and account statements; obtain copies of income tax returns for the last two years.
- Gather all life and accident insurance policies; don't forget to check travel clubs, alumni associations, credit cards companies, trade associations and any organization that might make life insurance available to its members.
- Contact Social Security and VA if applicable.
- Hold (do not spend) any Social Security received after date of death.
- Make certain that property and casualty insurance coverage continues on personal belongings, automobiles, real estate, and any goods in storage.
- Check for fire insurance on dwelling (does it cover if dwelling vacant?)
- Do not allow vehicles of the decedent to be driven by others unless they are added to the vehicle's insurance policy. This is a significant liability risk to the estate.

*All information herein is for general information only and should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion. You are urged to consult with your own attorney on any specific legal questions you may have.*

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