

You do not have to do this alone, and in many cases, you should not try. Some parts of this process require legal expertise. Some require technical skills. And some just require someone who can sit with you and make phone calls while you take a break. This section helps you identify who can help with what, so you can focus your own energy where it matters most.

When to Hire an Estate Attorney

- The deceased had significant assets (financial accounts, property, investments, businesses)
- Any account is solely owned and you need access to funds for living expenses
- You need a court order to access digital accounts (Google, Apple, Microsoft require this)
- There is no will and you need letters of administration from probate court
- There are disputes among family members about the estate
- The deceased owned cryptocurrency in self-custody (complex legal and tax issues)
- The deceased owned a business, domain names, or revenue-generating online accounts
- Ask specifically whether the attorney has experience with digital estate issues

Many estate attorneys offer a free initial consultation. Bring your master account spreadsheet and a list of what you are locked out of.

Attorney name and contact:

Finding Tech-Savvy Help

- Ask a trusted, tech-savvy friend or family member to help with mechanical tasks
- Be specific: calling carriers, filling out forms, searching email, cancelling subscriptions
- What NOT to share with helpers: master passwords, full financial access, SSNs, seed phrases
- If you delegate device access, stay present or set clear boundaries
- Consider a professional digital estate organizer if the volume is overwhelming

Cryptocurrency Recovery

CRITICAL WARNING

Be extremely cautious of crypto recovery scams. Never share seed phrases or private keys with anyone who contacts you unsolicited. Legitimate recovery services do not contact you first -- you contact them. Never send cryptocurrency to 'verify' or 'unlock' a wallet.

- Only consider professional recovery if you have partial information (partial seed phrase, possible passwords)
- Legitimate firms: Wallet Recovery Services, Brute Brothers, KeychainX -- research each before engaging
- Legitimate firms typically charge 15% to 30% of recovered funds (success-based fee)
- If the seed phrase is completely unknown and no partial info exists, recovery is not possible

Government Agencies to Notify

- Social Security Administration: call 1-800-772-1213 to report the death
- IRS: send death certificate copy to flag the SSN against fraudulent tax filings
- DMV: cancel the driver's license to prevent identity theft
- USPS: notify to forward or hold mail; cancel any Informed Delivery account
- Credit bureaus: send certified death certificate copies to all three (see B-06 for addresses)
- State tax authority: notify as required by your state
- Veterans Affairs (if applicable): call 1-800-827-1000

THIS CAN WAIT

Finding a grief counselor can wait -- but not forever. If you are managing day to day, professional support can wait until you are ready. But if you are struggling to function, reaching out sooner is an act of self-care, not weakness.

Grief and Support Resources

- The Dougy Center:** dougy.org -- grief support for children and families
- GriefShare:** griefshare.org -- local and online support groups
- Nat'l Alliance for Grieving Children:** childrengrieve.org
- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** call or text 988 for immediate support
- GYST:** getyourshittogether.org -- Chanel Reynolds' original resource