

Money is often the most stressful part of navigating a loss, and the digital world can make it harder. Subscriptions charge silently. Autopay keeps running. Bank accounts may freeze the moment you notify the institution. Before you take any financial action, read the warning below.

## Joint vs. Sole Account Ownership

### CRITICAL WARNING

Check the account ownership type for EVERY financial account BEFORE notifying the institution of the death. For joint accounts, the surviving owner retains full access. For sole accounts, notification triggers an immediate freeze -- the surviving family may lose access to funds until probate completes, which can take months. If unsure of account type, consult an estate attorney before calling the bank.

For each bank account, determine: joint (both names), sole (deceased only), or POD/TOD beneficiary

For joint accounts: notify the bank to remove the deceased and update ownership

For sole accounts: ensure you have alternative funds for living expenses before notifying

For POD/TOD accounts: these pass directly to the named beneficiary outside probate

Check credit card accounts the same way -- joint holders are not liable for sole-cardholder debts in most states

Check investment and brokerage accounts for TOD beneficiary designations

For retirement accounts (401k, IRA): check with the plan administrator for named beneficiaries

Account ownership determinations:

## Subscription Cancellation Triage

Search email for 'subscription,' 'receipt,' 'renewal,' 'billing,' 'payment,' 'membership'

Check app store subscriptions (iPhone: Settings > [Name] > Subscriptions; Android: Google Play > Subscriptions)

Check PayPal, Venmo, and other payment platforms for recurring payment agreements

Prioritize cancellations: highest monthly charges first, then services no longer needed

Keep services that others in the household still use (family streaming plans, internet, utilities)

Do NOT cancel domain registrations without understanding if they are needed for business or email

Address Buy Now Pay Later balances (Affirm, Klarna, Afterpay) -- these are debts for the estate attorney

Watch for annual renewals that may not appear for months -- set calendar reminders

Subscriptions cancelled (service, date, confirmation):

## THIS CAN WAIT

Low-cost subscriptions (streaming services, small recurring charges) do not need to be cancelled right away. A few months of charges will not materially affect the estate. Focus on large recurring charges first.

## Identity Theft Protection

*Deceased persons are targets for identity theft. Thieves monitor obituaries and public death records. An estimated 2.5 million deceased individuals are victims of identity fraud annually.*

Notify SSA of the death (1-800-772-1213)

Send certified death certificate copies to all three credit bureaus; request 'deceased' flag and freeze

Send death certificate copy to the IRS to flag the SSN

Cancel the driver's license with the DMV

Notify USPS to forward or hold mail -- identity thieves monitor mailboxes of the deceased

If an obituary is published, omit full birthdate, maiden name, and address

Be wary of bereavement scams from people using obituary details

File an identity theft report at [identitytheft.gov](http://identitytheft.gov) if you discover fraudulent activity

## Credit Bureau Addresses

Equifax: P.O. Box 105139, Atlanta, GA 30348

Experian: P.O. Box 4500, Allen, TX 75013

TransUnion: P.O. Box 2000, Chester, PA 19016

## Ongoing Financial Monitoring

Monitor credit reports monthly for at least the first year

Continue monitoring quarterly for at least one additional year (24 months total)

Watch for new accounts opened in the deceased's name

Watch for annual subscription renewals that surface months later

Google the deceased's name periodically to catch unauthorized identity use

Remove the deceased from data broker sites (or use a service like DeleteMe)

Retain copies of death certificate, letters testamentary, and all correspondence

Financial monitoring notes: