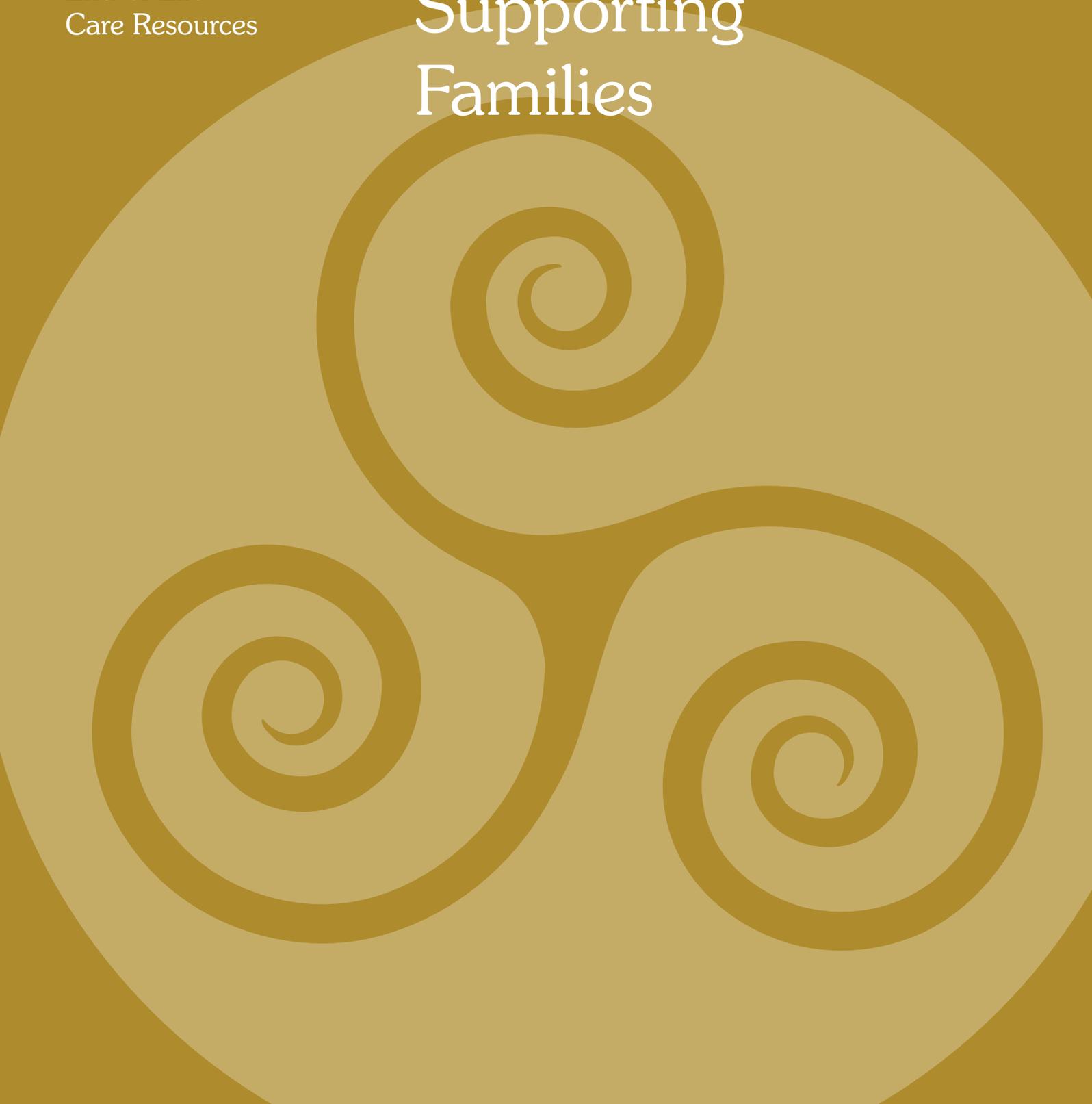


End-of-Life
Care Resources

Supporting Families



The information below was developed to support the Quality Standards for End-of-life Care in Hospitals

Supporting Family Members after a Death

Guidelines for Supporting Family Members after a Death:

- Managing the issues that may arise within different death scenarios – expected, sudden, the death of a child, miscarriage, intra-uterine death, stillbirth, neonatal death
- Practical information that may be required
- Bereavement supports available
- Addressing the matter of post-mortems, where relevant

Provision of Information to Family Members after a Death:

- Location and viewing times in the mortuary
- How to obtain a Death Notification Form
- Hospital and Community based Bereavement Services
- Organ donation
- The possibility of organ and tissue retention
- Options for collection of organ(s) or tissue from hospital and/or sensitive disposal of same, including burial/cremation
- Contacting undertakers
- Bereavement Care
- How to obtain a Death Certificate
- The nature of grief
- Specific information relating to types of death and lifecycle:
 - Loss of a baby through miscarriage,
 - Intra-uterine death of a baby
 - Stillbirth
 - Neonatal death
 - Death of a child
 - Death of an adult
 - Suicide and trauma deaths
- The bereavement needs of children
- Bereavement services, both hospital and community
- Local and national outreach services
- How to make a self-referral to a bereavement service
- The names and contact details of bereavement support personnel, including pastoral care team and social workers.

A Practical Guide for Bereaved Families

(Source: www.rip.ie)



Family Information

The time immediately following the death of a loved one can be overwhelming, with grief and bereavement complicated by the ordinary tasks of life, along with additional chores which may be difficult to even identify at first. The days immediately following the death will be focused on funeral or memorial service arrangements. Soon after, financial and legal issues may become the priority. Addressing them sooner rather than later can help avoid confusion and unnecessary delays and expense. Overleaf is a list of tasks that may warrant attention by families and can also be downloaded from www.rip.ie.

First actions following the death of a loved one

The Citizens Information Board

Before a Death

After a Death

The Funeral arrangements

Where The Death took place

Donating Organs

Registering the Death

Stillbirths

Registering a Death

Death Certificates

Post Mortems

Bereavement Counselling and Support

Bereavement counselling and support services

There are a range of bereavement counselling and support services available in Ireland. Some useful contacts and information to help you through this difficult time. These are listed in the Useful Organisations section of this folder.

Support services for those affected by suicide

Information on the range of counselling and support organisations in Ireland for those affected by suicide.

Sudden or Unexplained Death

Coroners

A Coroner in Ireland is an independent official with legal responsibility for the investigation of sudden and unexplained deaths.

Postmortems

A postmortem is a medical examination into the health of someone during their life and their cause of death. Circumstances in which postmortems take place in Ireland.

Inquests

Inquests in Ireland are official enquiries into the cause of a sudden, unexplained or violent death of a person.

Exhumation of the remains of a deceased person

Rules governing the exhumation of the remains of a deceased person in Ireland and how to apply for an exhumation licence.

Missing, presumed dead

If someone in Ireland is missing and presumed dead, there are important implications for the estate of the missing person. Information on the procedures when this occurs.

Death as a result of Crime
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
The Coroner
Inquests
Orphans
Burials and Cremation
Money Matters after a Death
The Deceased's Estate
Bereavement Counselling and Support
Sudden or Unexplained Death
Exhumation of the remains of a deceased person
Missing, Presumed Dead

In providing information to families, staff need to do so in a sensitive manner. They need to familiarise themselves with the contents of leaflets or websites so that they can provide appropriate support and guidance to families – it's not appropriate to hand over a leaflet and walk away.

A Practical Guide for Bereaved Families

(Source: www.rip.ie)

Not all of the points on this list will apply to your particular situation, but many will. If the deceased left specific instructions regarding preferences for funeral and burial arrangements, with a list of people to be notified, your job is that much easier. If not, you'll need to consult other family members and look for address or phonebooks that can help you with your task.

First Actions Following the Death of a Loved One

Contact the next of kin, especially those abroad who may have to book flights.

If a doctor is not present, contact the doctor in order to obtain a death certificate. The doctor will decide if a coroner needs to be called. In the case of sudden or unusual death, do not move anything until an official pronouncement of death has been made by the doctor.

If the deceased held an organ donor card, inform the doctor of this immediately.

Locate the person's burial instructions and last wishes, if these exist.

If the death occurs at home, you may also need to contact a member of the Garda Síochána. They will decide if a coroner needs to be called.

Notify others of the death; close friends, relatives, neighbours, employer and work colleagues.

Others to notify in the days following the death include:

- state authorities e.g. if the deceased was in receipt of a pension or other form of social security payment or health service
- insurance agencies and financial institutions
- the deceased's solicitor

Most people in Ireland contact a funeral director for help with funeral arrangements.

If it was the deceased's wishes to be buried, find out if a burial plot exists and determine its exact location. If you are using a local funeral director, they may help you with this.

Agree the following with the rest of the family:

- Will there be a wake? If yes, where will this be held?
- Will the body be on view (open or closed coffin)?
- are mourners welcome or is it "house private", for family only (mention in death notice)
- Location, date and time for the services
- Content for the death notice
- Decide on coffin, casket or pod (for a burial)
- Determine if you want ashes scattered or in a container (for a cremation)

- Do you want flowers or charitable donations (mention in death notice)
- Decide on prayers, readings, offerings, music and structure of the service
- Decide on who should be involved in the service and remember to ask them in good time
- Make provision for refreshments after the service. Book the venue and arrange caterers.

You may need to cancel some, or all, of the following:

- standing orders
- newspapers & other journal subscriptions
- milk deliveries
- coal deliveries
- telephone and broadband internet connection
- mobile phone
- bin collection
- rent
- TV & radio licence
- postal services (or have them re-directed)

If it was the deceased's wishes to have a natural or woodland burial, then you will need to contact an appropriate organisation, such as **Bury Me Green**.

If the deceased was religious, call the appropriate religious leader for guidance.

If the deceased wanted a non-religious ceremony, call the **Humanist Association of Ireland** (www.humanism.ie or 01 841 3116) for guidance.

Arrange for someone trustworthy to look after the house while you and the family attend the funeral. This is an important measure, to guard against burglary.

Avail of help that others may offer in sincerity and remember to keep a note of who to thank.

Jobs that may need to be done include:

- Cleaning the house
- Looking after the children
- Looking after an elderly person
- Watering plants at the deceased's home
- Taking care of the deceased's pet

Documents to locate (or order):

- death certificate – get this from the attending doctor
- any documents about prepaid funeral arrangements, burial plots or burial wishes
- wills

- trusts
- life insurance policies
- pension-retirement benefits and plans
- investment accounts
- business and partnership arrangements
- credit-card statements
- bank statements
- cheque books
- other evidence of assets and liabilities
- marriage and birth certificates
- nuptial agreements
- divorce documentation
- notes receivable
- documents of business ownership or business interest
- stocks, shares, bonds, annuities
- any title deeds for assets, such as land, vehicles or houses
- any leases
- health insurance (to claim for the deceased's final illness)
- any unpaid bills, notes payable or creditors
- safe deposit agreements and keys
- last tax returns
- Make an inventory of household goods, personal belongings, valuables etc, so that they can be accounted for and properly distributed.

Who deals with settling the Estate?

If the deceased had a will, it should specify who is to serve as the executor or personal representative. The person named is responsible for making sure creditors are paid, assets are distributed and estate tax returns are filed. This is usually the person who will investigate what benefits or insurance proceeds, if any, are owed to the heirs.

If the deceased died without a will (intestate), the law typically indicates who's in charge: usually a surviving spouse, if there is one, or an adult, child or parent. A court hearing will be held to appoint someone, and there could be a disagreement if more than one person wants the role.

If the deceased had financial advisors, such as accountants, solicitors, real estate agents, insurance agents, you should contact them and ask if any matters need to be taken care of immediately.

The Citizens Information Board

www.citizensinformation.ie

The Citizens Information Board has a comprehensive section of its website devoted to issues around death and bereavement. It may be helpful for staff to refer families to this website and where possible to familiarise themselves with some of the information.

It is not practical to provide all the information available on this website, therefore, the following section outlines some of the content available on this website but could be useful in helping staff direct families to the information they need.

As detailed in the following pages, the website covers information under the following headings:

before a death; after a death; money matters after a death; the deceased's estate; bereavement counselling and support; and, sudden or unexplained death:

Before a Death

Making a will

What is a will? The practical steps involved in making a will and what happens when someone dies without having made a will.

Power of Attorney

Power of Attorney is a legal device in Ireland that can be set up by a person (the Donor) during his/her life to allow another specially appointed person (the Attorney) take action if the Donor is absent or becomes incapacitated.

Legal Arrangements for Incapacity

The various legal arrangements which a person can make for looking after his/her affairs if he/she is unable to do so, for whatever reason.

This document is in: Home > Health > Legal matters and health

Advance Care Directives

An advance care directive in Ireland is a statement about the type and extent of medical or surgical treatment you want in the future, on the assumption that you will not be able to make that decision at the relevant time.

This document is in: Home > Health > Legal matters and health

After a Death

The following information on issues that arise immediately after a death may prove particularly useful for families following the death of their loved one.

(Source: www.citizensinformationboard.ie/publications/providers/booklets/entitlements_bereavement/publications_entitlements_bereavement3.html)

Issues that Arise Immediately After a Death

- The funeral arrangements
- Donating organs
- Registering the death
- Death Certificates
- Post mortems
- Death as a result of a crime
- The Coroner
- Orphans
- Burials and cremation

The Funeral Arrangements

Funeral arrangements are usually made by the immediate family of the deceased. The deceased may have left specific instructions about where to be buried or to be cremated and what form the religious or other service should take. Most people respect the deceased's wishes where possible.

If there is any dispute about who is entitled to make the arrangements or about the precise arrangements, the personal representatives are entitled to make the decisions. The personal representatives of the deceased are the executors of the will if there is a will or the people entitled to administer the estate if there is no will. The people entitled to administer the estate in the absence of a will are immediate family members. This means that non-married partners (whether opposite sex or same sex) are not entitled to be involved in the funeral arrangements unless they have been appointed executors or the immediate family agree to their involvement.

You may engage an undertaker or funeral director to deal with most aspects of the funeral. The Irish Association of Funeral Directors, (info@funeralnet.ie; 1800 927 111), has drawn up a code of practice that explains what you can expect from any one of their members.

Usually, the undertaker or funeral director makes the arrangements for providing a coffin, getting a grave, putting death notices in the papers or sending them to local radio stations. You may make the religious service arrangements directly with the church or the undertaker may do that for you.

Where the death took place

In hospital

The majority of deaths occur in hospital and the hospital staff arrange for the laying out of the

body and provide a medical certificate of the cause of death. Most hospitals have mortuaries where the body of the deceased may be held until the funeral arrangements are made. You may decide to take the body home or have the remains brought to a funeral home.

At home

If a death occurs at home, you need to contact the doctor (GP) who attended to the deceased during the final illness in order to get a Medical Certificate of the cause of death. You may arrange to have the body laid out at home or brought to a funeral home. You may also have to decide whether or not to have the body embalmed - the undertaker or funeral director can advise you on whether or not this is necessary.

Death abroad

Every country has its own rules about the formalities to be followed when a person dies. Irish embassies and consulates provide help in connection with the deaths of Irish citizens abroad and with arrangements for the return of the remains to Ireland. A list of Irish embassies and consulates is available at www.dfa.ie. If there is no Irish embassy or consulate in the country in question, you may be able to get help from the embassy of any other EU member state. An undertaker here in Ireland should be able to help you deal with the formalities and arrangements required.

Donating organs

Organ donation is possible only if the deceased died in hospital and immediate decisions are taken. If the deceased was carrying an organ donor card and died in hospital, the hospital contacts the person named as next of kin before arranging the removal of organs for transplantation. It is usual to get the family's consent for this but it is not clear that this is essential. If the deceased was not carrying an organ donor card or was too young to have such, the family may be asked to agree to organ donation. You can get further information from the Irish Kidney Association at www.ika.ie or phone 01 668 9788 / 668 9789.

Registering the death

The death may be registered at any Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths office. Before 5 December 2005, a death had to be registered in the district where it occurred. There are **Registrars of Deaths** in every county. Contact details for registrars for each county are provided in the Useful Organisations section at the rear of this folder.

All deaths must be registered. The main responsibility for registering a death rests with a relative who knows the details in relation to the death. If there is no such relative then anyone who was present at the death or anyone in charge of the premises where the death occurred

or anyone who found the body or who has knowledge of the death may be a qualified informant.

If the deceased person died following an illness, the doctor who attended the deceased person must complete the first part of the **Death Notification Form** and state the cause of death. The doctor must give this form to a relative if there is one and if that person is capable of acting as a qualified informant. The relative must complete the second part of the form giving various personal details of the deceased, including the PPS Number. The form must be given to a Registrar of Deaths within three months of the death. The relative (or qualified informant) must sign the Register of Deaths.

If there is no relative capable of doing this, then the hospital authorities (if the death occurred in a hospital) or the undertaker or some other qualified informer must complete the forms.

If the deceased died of any cause other than illness or where a doctor did not attend the deceased then the Coroner must be informed and he/she makes arrangements to register the death.

General Register Office

Government Offices, Convent Road, Roscommon. Tel: (090) 663 2900
Lo-call: 1890 252076 Web: www.groireland.ie

Stillbirths

If you are the parent of a stillborn child, there is no legal obligation on you to register the death. However, you may do so within forty-two days of the birth. The doctor who attended the birth or examined the child must provide, free of charge, a signed Medical Certificate which states the weight and gestational age of the child. You can then register the birth with the local Registrar of Births. If you do not do so, the hospital registers the birth at the end of the forty-two day period, and within 4 months of the birth.

Children born before 1 January 1995 may have their births registered by a parent at any time. Evidence of the birth is needed, for example, a statement from the hospital or the attending doctor. The parent(s) must personally attend the Registrar's Office.

Checklist of Details Required When Registering a Death

When registering a death, you need to have the following:

- Full name and surname of deceased
- The deceased's Personal Public Service Number (PPS No.)
- Sex, marital status, occupation and date of birth or age of the deceased
- Date and place of death
- If the deceased was married, the occupation of the spouse, or deceased spouse if widowed
- If the deceased was a child, the occupation of the parent(s) or guardian(s)
- Medical Certificate of the cause of death.

Death Certificates

You can usually get a Death Certificate from the Registrar of Deaths immediately after registering the death. If there is any delay in registration, you do not have to wait for the death certificate in order to apply for most social welfare payments - a death notice from a newspaper is adequate for the initial application. You need a Death Certificate in order to deal with the deceased person's estate.

Post mortems

A post mortem (sometimes called an autopsy) is an examination carried out by a pathologist after the death to try to establish the medical cause of death. The majority of deaths do not require any post mortem because the medical cause of death can be certified by a doctor - a GP or hospital doctor - who has been treating the deceased in the month prior to the death.

A Medical Certificate of cause of death is required in order to register a death. Sometimes the doctor may not be able to give such a certificate without conducting a post mortem, even if he/she has been treating the deceased.

The pathologist or hospital usually ask the family for permission to carry out a post mortem. However, it is not clear that such permission is necessary. In certain circumstances, a Coroner may have to be informed of the death and he/she may require a post mortem to be held. The permission of the family is not required in these cases.

Death as a Result of a Crime

If the deceased died as a result of a crime, then you may have to deal with the criminal justice system. Your main contact is with the Gardai who are investigating the crime. The family of a deceased victim have no specific role in the investigation and prosecution of a

crime (unless they are involved in the crime or are witnesses). Usually the Gardaí keep the family informed of the progress of the investigation.

Suicide is not a crime so there is no criminal investigation. However, the Gardaí may be involved if there is doubt about the cause of death.

The decisions on whether or not to prosecute and on what the particular charge is to be are made by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The DPP is not obliged to give reasons for his decision. Family members may write to the DPP giving their views.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

14-16 Merrion Street, Dublin 2, Tel: (01) 678 9222, Web: www.dpp.ie

At criminal trials, it is the practice to have seating available for family members. You are not, of course, obliged to attend the trial. You have no specific role in the trial itself but you may be given the opportunity to make a Victim Impact Statement when a verdict has been reached and the sentence is being considered. The judge has discretion about whether or not to allow a Victim Impact Statement.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal

You may be able to claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal if a family member dies as a result of a crime. The compensation may cover the funeral expenses and, if you are dependants of the deceased, the loss of earnings involved.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal

13 Lower Hatch Street, Dublin 2, Tel: (01) 661 0604

Further information

AdVIC (Advocates for Victims of Homicide) is a voluntary organisation which supports families bereaved by homicide. It has published a directory of information for people bereaved by homicide. (Homicide means unlawful killing and includes murder and manslaughter). Web: www.advic.ie

Crime Victims Helpline: 1850 211 407 Web: www.crimevictimshelpline.ie

The Coroner

A Coroner is involved in all cases of sudden and unexpected death. Certain deaths must be reported to the Coroner. All doctors, registrars of death, funeral undertakers as well as people in charge of the premises in which a person died are obliged to inform the Coroner (or a Garda Sergeant) if they suspect that the person died, either directly or indirectly:

- As a result of violence or misadventure

- By unfair means
- As a result of negligence or misconduct or malpractice on the part of others
- From any cause other than natural illness or disease for which the deceased had been seen and treated by a doctor within a month before the death
- In such circumstances as may require investigation.

It is an offence for any person not to carry out this duty. The Coroner may establish that the death was due to natural causes and, if so, he/she issues a Medical Certificate of the cause of death (which can then be used to register the death).

Family members may apply to the Coroner's Court for this certificate and the Coroner's report. The report is not sent automatically.

Inquests

If, after a post mortem, the Coroner is still unable to establish the medical cause of death, an inquest may be held. An inquest is an enquiry into the cause of death: when, where, how and why did the death occur. In general, an inquest must be held if the Coroner considers that the death was violent or unnatural or happened suddenly or from unknown causes. A post mortem and inquest are always required in cases of suicide.

An inquest does not involve any assessment of criminal liability. In some cases, a jury must be present at an inquest but the jury has a fairly limited role. If there are criminal proceedings involved, the inquest must be adjourned until those proceedings have been completed.

The family may attend the inquest and/or be represented by a lawyer. You or your lawyer may examine witnesses.

After the inquest, the Coroner issues a Medical Certificate of the cause of death. The Coroner registers the death in these cases. The Death Certificate is then available from the District Registrar's office.

Orphans

If the bereaved include orphans under the age of 18, immediate arrangements have to be made for them. In most cases, family members care for orphans until long-term arrangements are made. If there are no family members to do this, the HSE should be informed and they will make arrangements for the care of the children.

If the parent(s) have appointed guardians in a will, then the guardians are responsible for making decisions about the children. Appointed guardians do not have to accept this responsibility. If they do accept the responsibility, they do not necessarily take custody of the

children, i.e. have day-to day care.

Any dispute about who should be guardians and who should have custody has to be decided by the Courts. That decision is based on the best interests of the child.

Burials and cremation

Burials must take place in approved burial places. All burials must be registered with the local authority and the location of the grave noted - this is done by the people who manage the graveyard.

Before cremation, forms must be signed by a medical referee who must be satisfied that the attending doctor viewed the body before and after death, completed the Medical Certificate and the necessary form stating that there is no reason why the body should not be cremated. The attending doctor is required to examine whether or not the death should be notified to the Coroner.

There may be difficulties arranging an immediate cremation if the cause of death is not clear. A Coroner may in this case complete a Coroner's Cremation Certificate. In some cases, a Garda Superintendent has the power to stop a cremation.

More detailed information on the above is given in the following sections of the Citizens Information website www.citizensinformation.ie Families may find it helpful to consult with these sections which are listed below.

Registering a Death in Ireland

Every death that takes place in Ireland must be recorded and registered. Find how to register a death and how to obtain a death certificate.

Funerals

Information on standards in the Irish funeral industry, types of funeral and useful contacts.

Burials

Burial grounds (cemeteries) in Ireland are governed and maintained by local authorities. Maintenance, management and how to purchase a burial plot.

Cremations

Cremation is an alternative to burial, when someone dies. In recent years cremation has become increasingly popular in Ireland.

Bringing a body to Ireland for burial or cremation

When someone dies abroad it is often difficult to know what to do. Find out here the steps to take to bring a body home for burial or cremation.

Sending a body from Ireland for burial or cremation abroad

Before the body of a deceased person can be sent out of Ireland, certain formalities must be followed.

Money Matters After a Death

Money matters after a death

When someone close to you dies there are many things that have to be decided and done at a time of considerable stress. Overview of issues such as social welfare entitlements, tax and other money matters that may need to be addressed.

Access to money after a death

It is not easy to get immediate access to a deceased person's money in Ireland unless it is in a joint account. Find out more here.

Financial assistance following a bereavement

Supports are available in Ireland to help families following a bereavement. Describes certain once-off Health Service Executive (HSE) Area and social welfare payments. Find out how to apply.

Benefits and entitlements following a death

An overview of the different social welfare benefits available when someone dies.

This document is in: Home > Social Welfare > Social welfare payments > Death related benefits

Widow's/Widower's (Non-Contributory) Pension

This document describes the Widow/er's Non Contributory Pension which is payable to widowed people who do not qualify for a contributory pension and who pass a means test.

This document is in: Home > Social Welfare > Social welfare payments > Death related benefits

Widow's/Widower's (Contributory) Pension

A widow's/widower's contributory pension and related social welfare benefits may be payable if either the deceased person or the spouse has enough PRSI contributions. *This document is in:*

Home > Social Welfare > Social welfare payments > Death related benefits

Bereavement grants

Outlines the rules, regulations and application procedure involved in applying for the three types of Bereavement Grants. *This document is in: Home > Social Welfare > Social welfare*

payments > Death related benefits

Guardian's payments

A guardian's payment or Orphan's Pension may be made to a person taking care of an orphan. In some cases it can be paid directly to the orphan. *This document is in: Home > Social Welfare > Social welfare payments > Death related benefits*

Dependent Parent's Pension

This gives information about the pensions available to dependent parents whose supporting child dies as a result or while suffering from a work related illness or accident. It also outlines the differing rates of payment. *This document is in: Home > Social Welfare > Social welfare payments > Death related benefits*

Income tax credits and reliefs following a death

A brief summary of the tax treatment of unmarried and widowed people in the year of death. An outline of tax treatment of married couples in the year of death of one spouse is also included. *This document is in: Home > Money and Tax > Tax > Income tax credits and reliefs*

Capital Acquisitions Tax

If you receive a gift, you may have to pay Gift Tax on it. If you receive an inheritance following a death, it may be liable to Inheritance Tax. Both these taxes are types of Capital Acquisitions Tax. *This document is in: Home > Money and Tax > Tax > Capital taxes*

The Deceased's Estate

What happens the deceased's estate

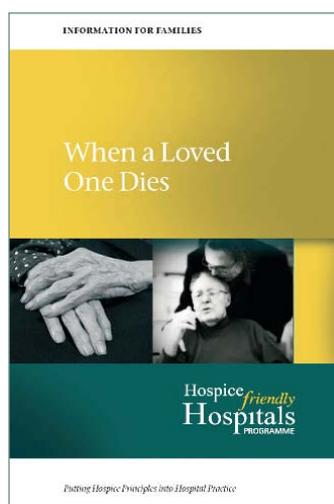
How to get access to the deceased person's money and property, the rights of family members under wills and how property is distributed on intestacy.

Dealing with the deceased's estate

This covers in detail the steps involved in taking out probate or letters of administration in Ireland. What an executor or administrator must do to implement the will or the requirement of the Succession Act.

Presumption of paternity

Explanation of the presumption of paternity in marital and non-marital situations in Ireland and the repercussions of this rule on children's rights to inheritance and maintenance. *This document is in: Home > Birth, Family and Relationships > Separation and divorce*



When a Loved One Dies

Guidance for families following the death of a loved one.

The contents of this booklet are included on the following pages. It may be useful for staff to familiarise themselves with the contents of this booklet and to give a copy of this booklet to family members who experience a bereavement

This booklet is also available to download at www.hospicefriendlyhospitals.net

Introduction
Grief
What Should the Grieving Person Do?
Tips for Dealing with Our Own Grieving
How Should We Help a Grieving Child?
How Children of Different Ages React
Tips for Helping a Grieving Child
Minding the Children
How Should We Help a Grieving Adult?
Tips for Dealing with a Grieving Adult
Some Time Later – Accessing Support
Information, Support and Counselling
How Do I Get a Death Certificate?
Funerals
Help Towards Costs
Money Concerns
The Will

Introduction

There are few more difficult losses than the death of someone close. We try to make sense of that loss and to live without that person. This is the process of grieving. Grieving affects people in varying ways, but it is usually painful. We can feel, shock, anger, disbelief, anxiety, guilt and sadness. It is also a natural process.

Death does not always surprise, but it does shock. We cannot really prepare ourselves for the loss of a loved one. Anticipated and unexpected deaths each bring their own painful emotions.

It is important to realise that these emotions are normal and are part of a process that has to be worked through.

This booklet aims to assist grieving people to understand the process and to deal with it. It covers many aspects of grieving because bereavement affects so many areas of a person's life. There are issues of health, relationships, finance and many others, as well as the core trauma of the loss of a dear one. This trauma, too, can be equally severe regardless of whether the death was sudden or came after a long illness.

Acknowledgments

The Irish Hospice Foundation is very grateful to Martin McCormack, Principal of the Medical Social Work Department in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, for permission to utilise *When Someone Close Dies* in the preparation of this booklet. *When Someone Close Dies* was written by Erna O'Connor, Siobhán O'Driscoll and Annette Winston. We also want to acknowledge the patient advice of the National Adult Literacy Agency, the National Council for the Blind of Ireland and the Irish Association of Funeral Directors.

We would like to thank Fr Bryan Nolan, Head Chaplain at Beaumont Hospital now working on the Hospice Friendly Hospitals Programme; Imelda Keogh, Medical Social Worker, and her colleague, Margaret Cartwright, Palliative Care Nurse, both of Mount Carmel Hospital, Dublin; Kate Bree, Nursing Midwifery Planning and Development Unit Co-ordinator, Sligo General Hospital; and Ann McKeown, Bereavement Coordinator, University College Hospital, Galway.

The Irish Hospice Foundation has also been helped by the various agencies providing bereavement support, counselling or therapy.

Grief

At funerals you will hear people say “She is bearing up very well.” “They are lucky they have other children,” or perhaps “He was very old, it was to be expected.” None of these observations, even if true, can convey the sadness, or indeed, the misery of a bereaved person. Their grieving is peculiar to them. It is also conditioned by their personalities, age, the relationship with the deceased, and the family and friends surrounding them.

Grieving will also manifest itself in various ways.

It is common at first to disbelieve what has happened. Shock and anger are other painful feelings. There can be guilt, despair, and anxiety. A bereaved person will often feel lonely. They can be depressed. There may also be physical symptoms. Another common feeling is relief, perhaps that the suffering of a dear relative is over.

Let us look in more detail at these feelings:

Disbelief and Shock

When a loved one dies, no matter how that happened, we can find it very difficult to believe. The garda who knocks at our door at night to tell us that a child has been killed, or the consultant who informs us that our elderly mother has just died, will often be met with disbelief, a numbness and shock.

Longing

We miss and long for the deceased person, sometimes imagining we have seen him or her. We may miss that sense of closeness with the dead person, a closeness that was so much part of our lives.

Anger

Bereaved people can often feel anger. We can blame God, our family, carers, friends and even the dead person for the death. There is nothing abnormal about this feeling.

Anxiety

After such a life-changing event, it is not unusual that grieving people may be overly anxious. We may feel isolated, be afraid for ourselves and others. We may wonder how we can deal with everyday life.

Guilt

A bereaved person may sometimes believe that they bear some responsibility for the death. There can be a feeling that, if certain actions had been taken, the person might not have died or might have had a better death. There may be worrying feelings about events in the relationship between the bereaved person and the deceased. Of course, it is all too easy to forget that every relationship has its ups and downs. Guilt feelings, however, can lead us to forget the happy times. Again, guilt feelings are a normal part of grieving.

Depression and Physical Symptoms

Depression can manifest itself in many ways. Grieving people will cry, lose sleep, be restless and be unable to concentrate. They may not want to eat or, indeed, to relate to relatives and friends.

Getting out of bed every morning can become a chore. As with physical symptoms (these can include nausea, body pains, forgetfulness and low energy, among other manifestations) it is important to seek medical advice if they continue.

What Should the Grieving Person Do?

When we have been bereaved it is vital that we accept and enlist all the supports available. We have to manage our grieving, and many people do it successfully, but we need constant backing from those close to us, various agencies and the wider community. Prolonged withdrawal from those who might help us and stoic isolation are unhelpful and can be dangerous to the health and well-being of a grieving person.

Tips for Dealing with Our Own Grieving

1. It is consoling to recognise that, for everyone, grieving is a painful, difficult time. Certain times of the year, such as anniversaries, or for example the birthday of a deceased loved one, can be particularly harrowing. Grief, too, will ebb and flow. It is helpful to remind ourselves that grief is about remembering, not forgetting. A dear one has died, but not the relationship with that person.
1. It is advisable not to make important decisions too soon after the death, unless they are unavoidable.
2. Keeping in contact with family, friends and local community supports the grieving

process. It is good to talk about the deceased person and the effects of the death.

3. It is important that when grieving we be gentle with ourselves, that we try to eat well, exercise, rest, keep some structure in our day, and do things we enjoy.
4. We can benefit by finding meaningful ways of remembering the deceased person, such as lighting candles, talking about them, or looking at photographs.
5. Books and leaflets on bereavement, support groups, and counselling can be beneficial. Names of some of these groups are included later in this document.

How Should We Help a Grieving Child?

How a child will face bereavement depends on many factors, and not just age. We forget sometimes that children understand more than is realised. In general, however, a child's age has a large bearing on how he or she will grieve. The child will also take his or her cue from how family members are reacting, the relationship with the deceased and how the death occurred. The child's temperament will also be a factor. Essentially, like adults, children will react to bereavement in their own individual ways.

Like adults, too, there may be disbelief, shock, and anger, as well as in different stages guilt, despair, anxiety, loneliness, depression, and physical illness (which may be similar to that of the deceased person).

Adults may also notice that the child plays in a sad, repetitive way with ambulances and dolls, or dark paintings. It is normal for some children to play that way. The theme of death may be observed in the school work of older children. Some other reactions are aggressive play, fear of the dark, nightmares, separation anxiety, refusal to attend school, bed wetting and thumb sucking.

How Children of Different Ages React

In general, children **under 2** do not understand death but if someone close disappears they may become irritable, anxious, clingy, subdued or uninterested in their surroundings. They can be helped by having one consistent carer.

Children of **2 to 5 years** sense when adults are upset. If someone close dies, they will be confused and insecure if, without explanation, they are placed with friends or relatives. They do not understand that death is permanent. They may repeatedly ask "When is Daddy coming home?" They may think they did something to cause the death, the death is their fault, or they are being punished.

From **5 to 12 years** children understand more about death. They know it is permanent. They may be particularly interested in the cause of death and burial. They may deny the reality of death and act as if nothing has happened. They may also become withdrawn, aggressive, have nightmares and physical symptoms, as well as separation anxiety. If a parent dies, they may worry about who will look after them.

The grief of **12 to 18** year-olds is similar to that of adults but with the emotional turmoil of adolescence. However, their grief may be complicated by their emerging independence from the family. They may feel guilt because they had a difficult relationship with the deceased person. They usually get their support from their peer group. They may try to take the role of mother or father.

Tips for Helping a Grieving Child

1. Children should be told as soon as possible about the death, preferably by someone close to them. It is a matter of judgement and knowing the children if you choose to tell children all together. They should be told in a sensitive manner by someone who knows them well.
2. We should be truthful, using words the child can understand. We should say that a person is dead or is dying, not that he or she has “passed away.” or has “gone to sleep”. A young child could be told that there had been a bad sickness and they couldn’t be made better or that he/she had stopped breathing. It is important to emphasize that the adult’s body can feel no more pain and that the child is not responsible for the death.
3. We may have to repeat the bad news and our explanations many times as children often ask questions repeatedly so they can understand. Use language that is appropriate to the child’s age. Give a simple explanation of the cause of death. Give them the technical term for the cause of death.
4. Children may be puzzled about the aftermath of a death. Because of adults’ grief they can feel very alone. It is important that they be included and consulted about viewing the body or attending the funeral.
5. It is good to include the child in plans to mark anniversaries and birthdays of the deceased person and to share memories of him or her, perhaps through photos, scrapbooks, and paintings.

6. The child should be encouraged to talk about his or her sadness and fears and be reassured that it is common to have strange feelings after a death.
7. There is nothing wrong with crying in front of a child but the reason for the tears should be explained.
8. It is helpful that a child's routine be reinstated as soon as possible after the death. The return to school may be particularly difficult as the child may be worrying about what to say to the other children about the death. Ask the child what they would like to be said. Link with the school and tell the child/children what has been said to classmates.

Minding the Children

Issues surrounding the care and guardianship of children can arise after death. If the parents are married to each other and one of them dies, the surviving parent has sole guardianship of the children. This changes, however, if the deceased had appointed another person to act as guardian in the event of his or her death.

If the parents are not married to each other, the mother has automatic sole guardianship. If the father wishes to be a guardian, he must apply for a court order appointing him. If the father's name is on the child's birth certificate, and the mother agrees to him being a guardian, there is little difficulty.

However, if the mother does not consent to the father's appointment as guardian, the court must act in the best interests of the child.

How Should We Help a Grieving Adult?

When someone is bereaved we often feel unsure how we should help them. We can be embarrassed, uneasy about what to say, or afraid that we are intruding. We may sometimes feel that we are not the appropriate person to make contact. Bereaved people can be isolated and feel friendless when this occurs. People who are bereaved need people. They need reassurance that they are respected, loved and that their loss is understood. Most of all they need a listening ear. As a general rule, it is better to offer support that is turned down rather than leave a bereaved person desolate and alone.

Tips for Dealing with a Grieving Adult

1. It is essential to keep in touch with a bereaved person. If a face-to-face encounter is not possible, a letter or phone call can be comforting.
2. We should listen attentively when a bereaved person wants to reminisce, even through tears, about the deceased person. Clichés such as “you will get over it” are unhelpful.
3. The grieving person may be upset with painful feelings such as guilt but this does not mean we should avoid the dead person’s name, or indeed change the topic.
4. If we don’t know what to say, or what words of comfort to use, we should not worry. Our being there is the essential thing.
5. Bereaved people can have good and bad days. We should be prepared that at times they may become unappreciative, tetchy or even angry with those most prepared to comfort them.
6. A bereaved person may also need practical help such as shopping, transport, and finances.

Most important, we should be conscious that the grieving person will need us long after the day of the funeral.

Some Time Later - Accessing Support

However bad we feel after the death of a dear one, it is possible to be supported through our grief, and like many bereaved people we may welcome some back-up. Depending on our needs, there are different levels of help available, both nationally and locally, to help a bereaved person. Many emotional, legal, financial and other practical issues can arise after a death. We outline some of these matters and include contact numbers that may be helpful.

Information, Support and Counselling

Many bereaved people find it helpful to get information about bereavement and to read accounts of other people's experiences. Some bereaved people welcome outside support from other bereaved people or from trained volunteers.

A small minority of bereaved people have significant difficulties and may need counselling or therapy. These may experience intense and unrelenting grief six months after the bereavement, prolonged agitation, depression, guilt, despair, or serious and persistent thoughts of suicide. In such situations the help of a GP or other professional guidance should be sought.

Who could I contact?

In this section there are contact numbers for a number of organisations that can be helpful. A national organisation can assist you or put you in touch with an appropriate local group in your area.

Information

- Access the bereavement leaflet series from The Irish Hospice Foundation on website www.hospice-foundation.ie or phone or e-mail the office for copies, 01 6793188, e-mail info@hospice-foundation.ie
- The Citizens Information Board has information on its website (www.citizensinformation.ie) on matters arising following a death. Ring 1890 777 121 for free and confidential information, or details of local Citizens Information Centres

- Access The Irish Hospice Foundation's Library booklists, 01 673 0061
- National Association of Widows in Ireland, 01 8733622
- National Suicide Bereavement Support Network, PO Box 1
- Youghal, Co Cork, website.nsbnsn.org or e-mail info@nsbnsn.org

Support and Counselling - National Organisations

- Each Hospice offers a bereavement support service to those bereaved through the hospice. The Irish Hospice Foundation does not provide bereavement counselling.
- Aware (10 am to 10 pm listening service for people living with depression) 1890 303 302
- Barnardos, (helpline and counselling for bereaved children and families) Monday-Wednesday-Friday, 10am-noon, 01 4732110
- Console (for those bereaved by suicide), 1800 201 890, 01 857 4300
- Irish Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (ISANDS) 01 8224688
- Irish Sudden Infant Death Association, 1850 391 391, 01 8732711
- Miscarriage Association of Ireland, 01 8725550
- Rainbows Ireland (headquarters for school-run support groups for bereaved children and children affected by parental separation),
01 4734175, e-mail ask@rainbowsireland.com
- Samaritans (24-hour listening service), 1850 609 090
- Bereavement Counselling Service (Dublin, Newbridge, Kildare, Bray and Carlow), 01 8391766 or e-mail bereavement@eircom.net
- Bethany (Catholic parish-based bereavement support groups, Dublin, Louth, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Wexford and Westmeath). To contact a local centre please ring 087 9905299 or email bethanysupport@eircom.net
- Turning Point, Dun Laoghaire (bereavement counselling and training, about €70) 01 280 0626.

Professional organisations who provide names of private practitioners throughout the Republic

- Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACT),
01 230 0061
- Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), 01 671 7122.

How Do I Get a Death Certificate?

A Death Certificate can be got from the local Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages by providing the following details to register the death:

- Full name and surname of deceased
- The deceased's Personal Public Service Number (PPS number)
- Sex, marital status, occupation and date of birth or age of the deceased
- Date and place of death
- If the deceased was married, the occupation of their spouse,
- or deceased spouse if widowed
- If the deceased was a child, the occupation of the father, or,
- if the parents were not married, the occupation of the mother
- Death Notification Form of the cause of death (see below).

1. Deaths occurring in the person's home, in a nursing home or in a hospital

If the death is at a person's home, in a nursing home or hospital, the death should be registered at any office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This should be done by either a relative of the dead person (usually the next-of-kin), an occupier of the house where the death took place, or by a person present at the death. The death should be registered as soon as possible, but not later than 3 months from the date of the death.

It is important to bring to the Registrar's office the Death Notification Form signed by the doctor who last attended the dead person. (If the person died in hospital you will need to get this Death Notification Form from the hospital). You will need to complete Part 2 of the form. You must then sign the register in the presence of the Registrar.

2. In some cases (depending on the circumstances and nature of the death) the Coroner must be informed and a post-mortem may be necessary. There may be a delay in registering a death when a post-mortem is carried out.

Deaths that have been referred to a Coroner are automatically registered when the Registrar gets a certificate of post-mortem examination or inquest from the Coroner. Therefore, you do not need to register such deaths. If you are unsure whether a death needs to be registered please consult the office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages which will be able to advise you.

You do not necessarily have to wait for the Death Certificate before claiming social welfare benefits, as a copy of the Death Notice from the newspapers will be accepted if there is a delay in getting the certificate.

You should approach a maternity hospital or your local Registrar for information on how to register a stillborn child.

There is no charge to register a death. While you are registering the death, you can get copies of the Death Certificate for €10.00 each. There is a reduced fee for those who need the Death Certificate for social welfare purposes.

If you have difficulty locating a Registrar you should contact:

General Register Office, Government Offices, Convent Road,
Roscommon, Co. Roscommon. Tel: +353 (0) 90 6632900. LoCall: 1890 252076
Website: www.groireland.ie

Funerals

Funerals are expensive. It is a good idea to be clear about what the Funeral Director is offering, and at what cost. Members of the Irish Association of Funeral Directors, unless the family states otherwise, are required to discuss the costs when arrangements are being made. A detailed breakdown of all charges should then be given to the family.

Some Funeral Directors are dearer than others, so you may like to seek a number of quotes. The price of a coffin can have a large bearing on the final bill, as can, for example, the number of limousines hired. You might also like to consider cremation rather than burial.

There can also be many ancillary costs, among them books for signing condolences, flowers, music for the ceremony, and the church offering.

Help Towards Costs

You may be entitled to either a Bereavement or a Funeral Grant. Ring the Department of Social and Family Affairs, 1890 20 23 25 or 1890 500 000 for an application form. Your income must be under a certain threshold. If you are in difficulty with funeral expenses you can apply for assistance to your local Community Welfare Officer (before you make any payment to the Funeral Director).

Money Concerns

A number of financial issues can arise for families after a death, among them difficulties in getting access to a dead person's money to pay for funeral expenses, or indeed living expenses for children or a spouse. Unless there is a joint account it is not easy to get access to the deceased's money until probate (process of proving a will is genuine) is taken out.

However, a financial institution may release a small amount of money if a personal representative or the next-of-kin signs an agreement that the bank or building society will not lose if there are other claims on the money.

If the deceased's account is held jointly with someone other than a spouse, the financial institution may require a statement from the Revenue Commissioners allowing the transfer of money while possible tax liabilities are checked.

Immediately following a death there may be concerns about money and living expenses. If the dead person was a social welfare recipient the payment usually continues for six weeks after the death. The local social welfare office will advise if the payment was for unemployment or other social welfare benefits. The Pensions Service Office, 1890 500 000, will advise in the case of pensions such as the Widow's/Widower's pensions, or the One-Parent Family Allowance.

The Will

If the deceased person has left a will, the executor or executors generally carry out the wishes of the deceased. She/he can either contact a solicitor, or the Probate Office, for assistance and advice in getting a grant of probate. This allows the executor/executors to settle any debts and distribute the assets. Cost savings can be made by dealing directly with the Probate Office.

If the deceased has not left a will, he or she has died "intestate." The next-of-kin may have to take out Letters of Administration, equivalent to a Grant of Probate. This can be done through a solicitor or by contacting the Probate Office directly at The Four Courts, Dublin 7, 01 8725555.

Irish Hospice Foundation Bereavement Leaflet Series

1. Understanding grief
2. When someone you care about is bereaved
3. Grieving the death of someone close
4. Living through the death of your partner or spouse
5. Adults grieving the death of a parent
6. Grieving the death of a child
7. The grieving family
8. Children's grief
9. Talking to children about traumatic death
10. Adolescent grief
11. Bereaved by suicide
12. Grief at work
13. Coping with the death of your same-sex partner
14. Coping with Christmas when you are bereaved

The above series of leaflets has been developed by The Irish Hospice Foundation. It may be useful for wards to hold copies of these leaflets on file and give them out as relevant to the individual case.

Copies of these information leaflets are available on request from:

The Irish Hospice Foundation – 01 679 3188 or may be printed from the IHF website.

Insert
hospital specific
information