

Attorney Timothy P. Crawford, CPA, CELA*, CAP**
wanted to share this information with you.

WHAT TO DO WHEN A LOVED ONE PASSES AWAY

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Whether your spouse has just passed away or you've lost your mom or dad, the emotional trauma of losing a loved one often comes with a bewildering array of financial and legal issues demanding attention.

"It's difficult enough for family members to handle the emotional trauma of a death, let alone taking the steps necessary to get these matters in order," says Harry S. Margolis, a Boston-based elder law attorney and president of ElderLawAnswers.

As the executor or representative of the will, you first should secure the tangible personal property, meaning anything you can touch such as silverware, dishes, furniture or artwork, he points out.

"Then, take your time; while bills need to be paid, they can wait a week or two without any real repercussions. It's more important that you and your family have time to grieve. Financial matters can wait," says Margolis.

When you are ready, but not a day sooner, Margolis advises meeting with an attorney to review the steps necessary to administer the will. While the exact rules of estate planning differ from state to state, the key actions include:

File the will and petition in probate court in order to be appointed executor.

Collect the assets. This means that you need to find out about everything the deceased owned and file a list or inventory with the court.

Pay the bills and taxes. If an estate tax return is due, it must be filed within nine months of the date of death.

Distribute property to the heirs. Generally, executors do not pay out all of the estate assets until the period for creditors to make claims runs out, which can be as long as a year.

Finally, you must file an account with the court listing any income to the estate since the date of death and all expenses and estate distributions. "While some of these steps can be avoided through trusts or joint ownership arrangements, whoever is left in charge still has to pay all debts, file tax returns and distribute the property to the rightful heirs." says Margolis.

**“Those Who Plan Ahead Win.
Those Who Don’t Plan Ahead Lose.”**

This article is for informational purpose only and is not intended as legal advice. It is recommended that you call Timothy P. Crawford for a free conference to discuss your situation in more detail. Attorney Crawford can be reached at 1-262-634-6659. Please refer to this article when you call.

*Attorney Timothy P. Crawford is a Nationally Board Certified Elder Law Attorney (**CELA**). He has been Board Certified by the National Elder Law Foundation which has been approved as the Sole Certifying Organization for Elder Law Attorneys by the American Bar Association.

Timothy P. Crawford was invited to join the Council of Advanced Practitioners (CAP**) of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (**NAELA**) in August of 2005. **CAP** is a small group of premier elder law attorneys, all of whom have been members of NAELA for at least 10 years, are certified as elder law attorneys by the National Elder Law Foundation, and are AV rated by Martindale Hubbell, a service that provides an independent rating of the quality of attorneys, as one of the top attorneys in the nation.

Attorney Timothy P. Crawford has been selected as a **Fellow** of NAELA. **Fellow** is the highest honor bestowed by the Academy. Selection as a **Fellow** signifies that his peers recognize the lawyer as a model for others and as an exceptional lawyer and leader.

Attorney Timothy P. Crawford has a superb rating of 10 out of 10 with A V V O.

A V V O has awarded to Attorney Timothy P. Crawford the A V V O Client’s Choice Award.

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