

Five Things You Must Know NOW Before Someone Dies

Whether a death is expected or a total surprise, you need certain pieces of information about the people you love in order to fill out a death certificate. Keep this information on file to make it easier to move through the end-of-life formalities required by federal and state governments.

One: Social Security Number

Sure, you know your own Social Security number, and you probably know the numbers for your spouse and kids. But do you have access to the numbers for your parents, your siblings, or other relatives if you were called upon to take care of their final arrangements?

Two: Mother's Maiden Name

This may seem simple, but over the course of time, you may lose track of each of your parents' mothers' maiden name or spelling. For example, while reconfirming with my dad about his mother's last name, oops, I had misspelled it!

Three: Place of Birth

Sure, you know where you were born. But do your spouse and kids know? Do you know your parents' birthplaces? If you moved around a lot as a kid, were your siblings born in different cities? Just as the birthplace city and state is important on a birth certificate, it's vital for a death certificate.

Four: Veteran Information

Those who served in the U.S. military can get free burial benefits for both veterans and their spouses, including a burial plot, headstone, and military funeral services. You'll need to provide the veteran's service number, military branch, wars fought, service time, and discharge information. Do you know where that information is kept?

Five: Online Passwords

This isn't needed for death certificates, but with so much of our lives online protected by passwords, when someone dies, if you don't know his/her passwords, you may not be able to access or shut down any online or cell phone accounts. Internet Service Providers will not give you this information unless you present a death certificate for the account holder. Make a master list of your online passwords and their associated accounts for future reference.

Keep this information with your will, advance medical directives, insurance information and other important documents. You've got those, right?