

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

Stanislaus/Merced Counties

Rev. William C. Sanford, retired clergyman and FCA member devised a publication which he named "The Death Made Less Difficult Book."

Rev. Sanford's "book" was an organized accumulation of facts and information which he felt would someday "be greatly appreciated by my next of kin." His work was a useful and practical guide designed to help navigate the many steps involved in saying a final good-bye to a loved one.

Every individual's life records and last wishes are, of course, different. The information contained at this site is offered merely as a check list and suggested course of action.

Whether you establish a binder such as the good reverend did, or store this information in your computer or choose some other form of media, the important thing is to start the accumulation of data and instructions sooner rather than later and insure that your death is difficulty free as possible.

“THE DEATH MADE LESS DIFFICULT BOOK”

GETTING READY & GETTING GOING

1. Buy a 3 ring binder with pockets on the inside front and back covers.
2. Put into your binder about two dozen clear plastic pockets to hold various documents.
3. Create a page titled **FIRST THINGS TO DO.** See APPENDIX A for possible items to include on your list.
4. Make your own **TABLE OF CONTENTS.** See APPENDIX B for a guide to possible sections.
5. Start listing information and accumulating documents according to the Table of Contents you have established.

Note: This step is the heart of the project and taken together can represents a great deal of effort. It may be made less of a burden by concentrating on doing one section at a time and setting a time schedule for its completion.

6. Inform relevant family members and especially those who will handle your last wishes as to where this information is stored. **Do this is writing.**

APPENDIX A

WHEN A LOVED ONE DIES:

FIRST THINGS TO DO

When ever possible include names, phone numbers and contact information.

1. Call 911. If the decedent has been under hospice care, then phone hospice.

Note: Authorities or hospice will notify mortuary of your choice.

2. Notify immediate family members.
3. Call clergy if appropriate. Arrange a meeting and bring “Death Made Less Difficult” information.
4. Meet with funeral director. Again, bring your “Death Made Less Difficult” information.
5. Supply newspaper with Obituary and Photograph(s).
6. Inform others who should know of the death.

(a) Business & Professional Organizations (e.g. Social Security Administration, Insurance Companies, Banking and Credit Card organizations, Pension funds, Utility companies , Voter Registration etc.)

- (b) Charitable organizations which the decedent supported including any service organization.
- (c) Personal mailing list if one is kept (e.g. Christmas Card List).

APPENDIX B

“DEATH MADE LESS DIFFICULT BOOK”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note: *Please indicate location of physical documents not actually included in a book or computerized version. (e.g. insurance policies)*

SECTION 1 BEFORE DEATH

1. Advance Health Care Directive
2. Durable Power of Attorney
3. List of or location of passwords (computer, auto, home, and office)

SECTION 2 AFTER DEATH

4. List of Death Related Memorial Preferences
5. Organ Donor Card (if applicable)
6. Social Security Card
7. Certificates (Birth, Marriage, Divorce)
8. Military Service Records (DD 214)

9. List of Family Survivors with contact information
10. List of contact Organizations (Employers, Fraternal, Charitable, etc.)
11. Instructions for Pet Care & Disposition
12. Obituary and Photo for newspaper

SECTION 3 ESTATE SETTLEMENT

13. Last Will & Testament and/or Trust Information
14. List of Financial Assistants (Attorney, Banker, Insurance Agent, Financial Planner, etc.)
15. Bank and investment forms related to death (Consult appropriate financial institutions)
16. Safe Deposit or Storage Unit Information (keys, person with access permission, disposition of contents)

17. Pension, Retirement Plans and Annuity Information
18. Insurance Policies
19. Property information (Deeds, Joint Tenant Death notification, Certificate of Vehicle Title etc,)
20. Investment Information (List, location of certificates, broker contact)
21. Debts (Mortgages, credit cards, etc.)
22. Taxes (Recent return copies, audit determinations)

SECTION 4 MISCELLANEOUS

23. Naturalization Documents
24. Passport(s), Dual Citizenship Documents
25. Court and other Legal Records pertinent to your property or other assets

“There is no getting around it: someone has to tidy up when our time is up. What a tremendous gift to that person to be fully prepared.” - Rev. Sanford.