

Accident Victim Assistance

Educational Content

4. Gather documents and information

Organizing information early makes later processes smoother.

Collect:

- Full legal name, date of birth, Social Security number of the deceased.
- Driver's license, vehicle registration, and insurance information, if a crash.
- Employment information (employer name, address, pay stubs, employment contract if available).
- Medical records related to the incident, including EMS run sheets, ER records, and hospitalization records if they did not pass immediately.
- Health insurance, life insurance, and any accidental death or employer-provided policies
- Existing estate documents: will, trust, powers of attorney, beneficiary designations.

Keep a simple timeline: date and time of the accident, when they were pronounced dead, and any major medical events in between.

5. Do not rush into insurance statements or settlements

Insurance adjusters will often contact the family quickly.

1. Provide only basic confirmation information (name of decedent, your relationship, contact info) until you have legal advice.

2. Do not give recorded statements, sign medical releases, or accept any settlement or "condolence payment" without talking to an attorney; early offers are often far below the true value of the claim.

3. Keep copies of all correspondence, emails, and letters from insurers, employers, and others.

6. Consult a wrongful death / injury attorney early

In a fatal accident caused by someone else's negligence (driver, employer, property owner, product manufacturer, drunk bar patron, etc.), a wrongful death and possibly a survival action may be available.

1. Speak with an experienced wrongful death or serious-injury attorney in the state where the accident occurred; most offer free consultations.

2. Ask about:

- Who is legally allowed to bring a wrongful death claim in that state (often spouse, children, and parents; sometimes other next of kin or estate).
- Whether a separate "survival" claim applies for the decedent's own pain, suffering, and medical bills before death.
- Applicable statute of limitations (commonly around two years from death for wrongful death in many states, but this varies and can be shorter in some situations).

3. Ask the lawyer to immediately:

- Send preservation letters for vehicles, electronic data (event data recorders, dash cams), employer records, or property-owner surveillance.
- Take over communications with insurance companies so the family is not pressured.
- Begin investigating liability and identifying all potentially responsible parties (driver, employer, vehicle owner, bar under dram shop laws, government entities in some cases).