

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU LOSE SOMEONE TO SUICIDE

The First 24 Hours



About This Resource

This guidebook was created in collaboration with suicide loss survivors who participated in Samaritans of Singapore's (SOS) Death Administrative Matters research study project in 2024.

SOS expresses its heartfelt appreciation to participants for their invaluable efforts and contributions to supporting other suicide loss survivors in the community.

How To Use This Guidebook

This guidebook contains instructions and information for tackling urgent death administrative tasks.

It also provides a comprehensive checklist of other remaining administrative tasks for you to plan at your own pace.

(Information accurate as of September 2025)

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**Feeling overwhelmed?
We recommend sharing
this guidebook with
someone who can support
you on this journey.**



A note for the bereaved's support circle

Supporting the bereaved
doesn't require big gestures.

Often, small proactive
gestures can bring profound
comfort to suicide
loss survivors.

Examples Of Simple Gestures

1



Ordering or bringing them a meal.

2



Giving them a ride to their appointments.

3



Helping with the funeral set-up.

4



Picking up coffee or a favourite drink for them.

5



Offering to collect or drop off documents.

"Simple things, though very small, can help."

- Suicide Loss Survivor

6



Accompanying them to the mortuary.

"People who would have that heart, and eye for details, they will just do the smallest thing for you. So that's what makes the difference."

- Suicide Loss Survivor

Advice By Suicide Loss Survivors

Hear from other suicide loss survivors on what was helpful in the death administration process and their grief journey.





Pace Yourself With Administrative Tasks.

"I don't do everything within the same few months, I spread it into years. It took me about 1-2 years to finish everything."

Make Important Decisions Carefully.

"I gave myself time to process... I didn't rush into it."

"When you make an important decision when you're in deep grief, you should really slow down and think through and process it. Don't be too quick to make a decision."

Say Goodbye In Your Own Time And Way.

"my friend suggested, maybe you should just close your wake and open it only at 1:00 PM. So it was just us in the morning. It was one of the best decisions in the first week because we could spend time with my son. It made all the difference."

"What should I do with the ashes and all at the time. I was thinking that, OK, maybe I could use his ashes to make them into a piece of small jewellery that I could carry around."

Find People You Can Confide In.

"I went through that whole journey, then now today, I just know that from that group of people those who can still talk to, I will talk to (them). Those who cannot, I will just let go of them."



Administrative Tasks Checklist

1

POLICE INVESTIGATION

- Report death to police officer

Go to page 10 →

2

CORONER'S INQUIRY (CI)

- Inform officer if you want a CI
- Follow up with the officer for CI hearing dates

Go to page 12 →

3

INFORMING OTHERS

- Tell family, friends, work / school, etc.

Go to page 14 →

hey, are you free to talk right now?

4

REGISTERING THE DEATH

- Prepare documents
- Visit the mortuary
- Identify the body
- Collect body from mortuary
- Register the death
- Collect death certificate
- Obtain permit for burial / cremation

Go to page 16 →

5

PLANNING THE FUNERAL

- Prepare documents
- Set budget
- Contact funeral company
- Hold funeral / wake

Go to page 18 →

6

APPLYING FOR GRANT OF LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION / GRANT OF PROBATE

- Contact lawyer
- Determine what you should apply for

Go to page 21 →

7

Pace Yourself When Handling These Tasks

- Close Active Accounts
- Settle Outstanding Bills
- Cancel Travel Plans

- Assess & Claim Assets
- Transferring Ownership Of Assets
- Others

Refer to pages 25-27 of guidebook for a more detailed checklist of non-urgent tasks

Police Investigation

What To Expect

In Singapore, when a death occurs, a police investigation is conducted to ascertain the identity of the deceased and cause of death. Police are required to secure and preserve the scene where the body was found pending further investigation.

What You Need To Do

- ☐ Report the death to a police officer (if not yet done so).
- ☐ Leave the body alone. Do not move the body unless you have been authorised to do so.
- ☐ Cooperate with the Investigating Officer (IO).



You may be asked to assist in the investigation by locating documents (e.g. deceased's NRIC).



The IO may interview you and your family members to understand the circumstances of the death.

And Remember...

You have the right to request that the police officers conduct the investigation sensitively.

Here Are Some Things You Could Say:

"This is very difficult for us. Please conduct the investigation with care to avoid adding to our distress."

"We have cultural practices to follow. Could these be considered during the investigation?"

"We would appreciate updates or questions to be communicated with care during this fragile time. If possible, a consistent point of contact could help."



Coroner's Inquiry (CI)

What is A CI?

A CI is used to determine the identity of the deceased and circumstances surrounding their death.

If You Would Like To Hold A CI:

- ☐ Let the Investigating Officer know during the police investigation.
- ☐ The coroner's hearing is open to the public. Follow up with the officer on the date and time of the coroner's hearing.

However Please Be Informed That...



A CI is not conducted for all suicide deaths. The decision to hold a CI is ultimately made by the Coroner.

Suicide Loss Survivors May Have Different Experiences With The CI

Some suicide loss survivors find the CI distressing.



"I felt like arranging a room to escape to... a way out of a painful situation."

But some suicide loss survivors regret not holding a CI.



"At that point in time, I was in too much grief and I just don't want to go through it. Now when I look back, it's actually very important, but I missed it."

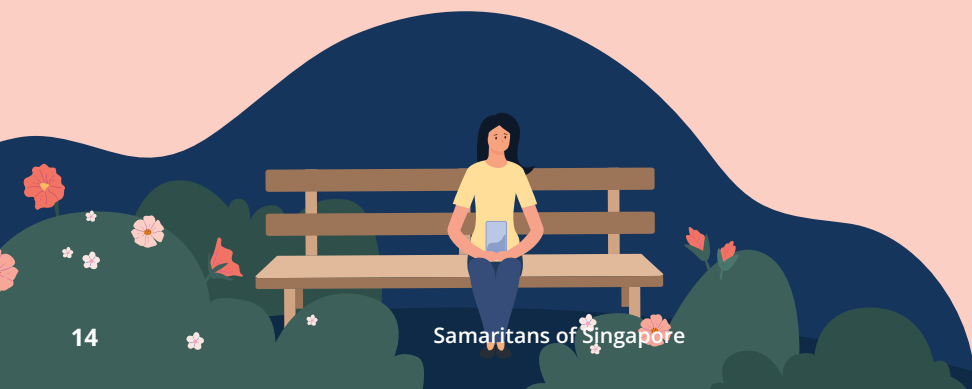
3

Informing Others

Balancing grief and administrative matters is challenging. It may be helpful to reach out to others for help or make arrangements so that you can manage these tasks.

You May Wish To Inform:

- ☐ Relatives
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Religious organisations
- ☐ School / Workplace
- ☐ Professionals (e.g. therapist)



Managing Expectations

Informing others of your loss is often a difficult and painful task.

You may receive negative reactions from others.

Keep in mind, you can choose whether you would like to respond to them or give yourself space not to.



Here Are Some Things You Could Say:

Are you sure?

Thanks for checking in, but I'm not ready to share.

It's still too soon to discuss how they passed away.

Understand. Take care.



I don't feel like saying anything more at this time.

I'll share more with you when I feel ready.



Or, you could say nothing at all. You are not obligated to provide everyone with a response.

4

Registering The Death

1

Submit Documents

Provide these documents for the Investigating Officer **before** you visit the mortuary:

- ☐ Deceased's identification documents (e.g. NRIC).
- ☐ Informant's (your) identification documents (e.g. NRIC).

2

Visit The Mortuary

After the Coroner releases the body, you may claim the body from the mortuary. You may also be asked to identify the body.

Please find out more details from the Investigating Officer.



3

Collect Death Certificate

After submitting the documents, download a digital copy of the death certificate from My Legacy portal:



Scan the QR code or click on the URL for My Legacy portal

<https://mylegacy.life.gov.sg/find-a-service/download-death-or-stillbirth-certificate/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

- ☐ Download the death certificate within 30 days.
- ☐ Save the death certificate to your personal device.



It is important that you **keep a copy of the death certificate** as it will be used for things like planning a funeral, closing bank accounts, etc.

4

Obtain Permit For Burial Or Cremation Services

Documents Needed:

- ☐ Death certificate.
- ☐ Requester's (your) identification documents (e.g. NRIC).

Submit your application via the NEA e-portal:

For Cremation



<https://www.eportal.nea.gov.sg/app/applications/create/application-for-cremation>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

For Burial



<https://www.eportal.nea.gov.sg/app/applications/create/application-for-permit-to-bury-body>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

5

Planning The Funeral

Documents Needed:



Death Certificate

Contains permit to bury / cremate.



Permit for Wake

If you decide to hold the funeral at HDB void deck.



*Permit from NEA

If your funeral is more than 7 days after the death.

*Apply online via the NEA ePortal:



<https://www.eportal.nea.gov.sg/app/applications/create/application-to-retain-corpse-for-a-period-exceeding-7-days>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

Things To Consider:

- ☐ Budget
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Duration
- ☐ Religious beliefs
- ☐ For overseas death - check if funeral company offers repatriation services
- ☐ Obituary (optional) - newspaper or social media

1

Contact The Funeral Director / Funeral Company

What Does The Funeral Director Do?

- ☐ Collect the body from the mortuary.
- ☐ Send the body for embalming (if required).
- ☐ Arrange the funeral wake.
- ☐ Plan for either burial or cremation followed by scattering or storage of ashes.
- ☐ The funeral company can also help to store the body temporarily.



TIP

Use My Legacy portal to:

- ☐ Find funeral services that align with your religious beliefs.
- ☐ Learn about important questions to ask during the planning process.



Scan the QR code or click on the URL for My Legacy portal

<https://mylegacy.life.gov.sg/find-a-service/find-funeral-director/>
(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

Booking The Funeral Venue (For Void Deck Or Multi-Purpose Hall)

Option #1



Make A Booking Online On LifeSG:

Note that you need to be 21 years old and a relative of the deceased to apply.

<https://www.life.gov.sg/services/book-facilities>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)



Option #2



Get A Permit From Your Town Council

Call your Town Council's Essential Maintenance Service Unit 24-hour hotline if you need to contact them on a public holiday or after working hours:

<https://mylegacy.life.gov.sg/find-a-service/find-town-council/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)



Helpful Resources For Funeral Planning



General Information

<https://mylegacy.life.gov.sg/when-death-happens/arrange-the-funeral/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)



Consumer Protection Tips

<https://www.cccs.gov.sg/consumer-protection/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)



Temporary Parking For Bereaved Family Members

<https://www.hdb.gov.sg/car-parks/season-parking/temporary-parking-for-bereaved-family-members>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

Applying For Grant Of Letters Of Administration / Grant Of Probate

These are legal documents which give the applicant the authority to manage the deceased's assets.

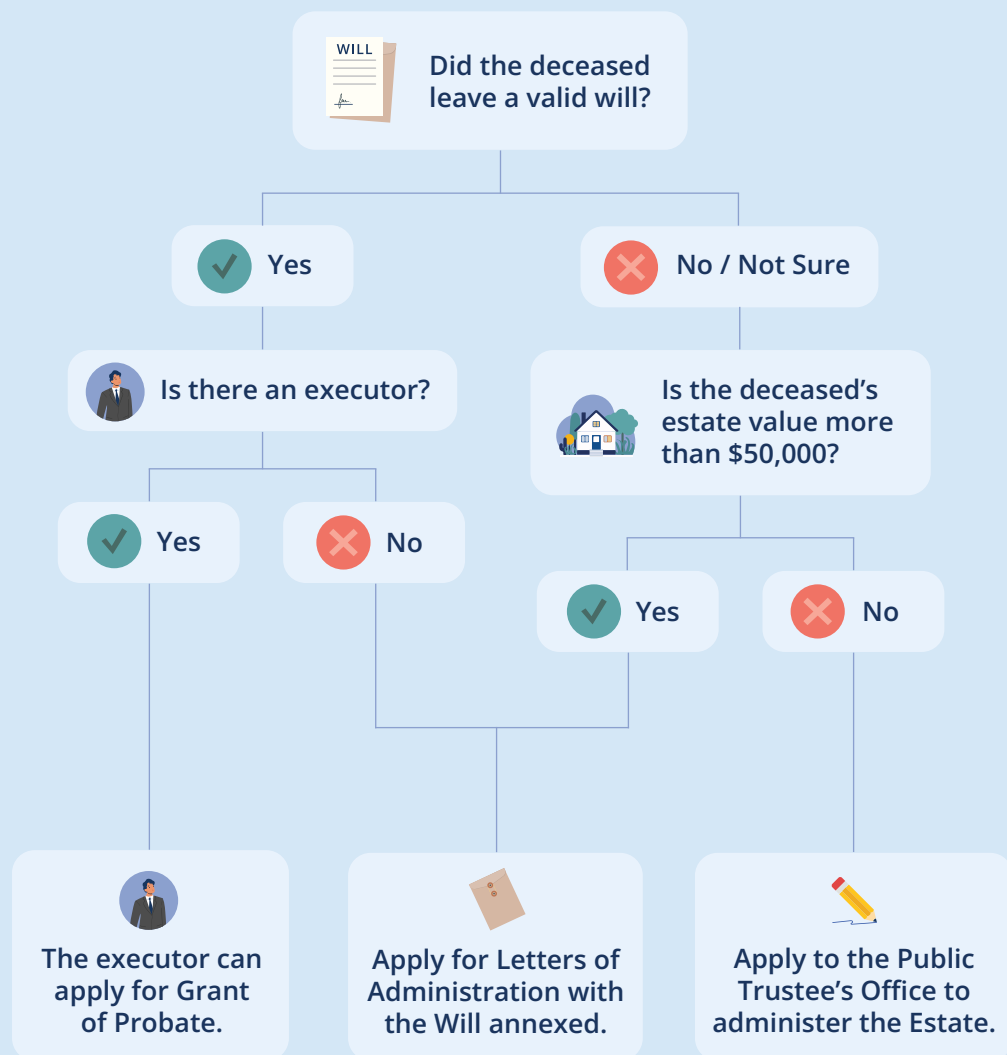


Scan the QR code or click on the URL for more information and a list of required documents

<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/family/apply-for-letters-of-administration>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

What Should I Apply For?



Islamic Inheritance Law



Only up to one-third of the deceased's estate can be distributed in accordance with their will and this cannot go to legal heirs unless all heirs consent. The rest must follow Islamic inheritance law.



If a portion of the estate remains unclaimed after all legal heirs receive their shares, it will go to the Baitulmal administered by MUIS.

What You Need To Do



Collate a list of the deceased's assets



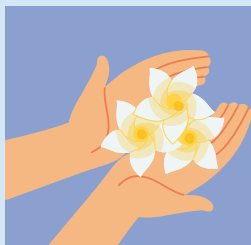
Prepare some funds
(applying for these documents incurs costs depending on the value of the deceased's assets)



Engage a lawyer
(optional but recommended)

Please Be Informed That:

Some lawyers may lack the sensitivity needed when handling cases involving suicide.



Take some time to assess whether the lawyer's approach and expertise are a good fit for your needs before committing to their services.

7

Other Non-Urgent Tasks



Checklist

Some things to consider, this list is non-exhaustive.



Close Active Accounts

- ☐ Bank accounts
- ☐ Phone plans
- ☐ Internet plans
- ☐ Delivery services
- ☐ Licences or memberships
- ☐ Cards
- ☐ Data plans
- ☐ Online subscriptions
- ☐ Automatic GIRO payments
- ☐ Cloud storage services (e.g. iCloud, Google Drive)



Settle Outstanding Bills

- ☐ Credit card bills
- ☐ Utilities (water, electricity, gas)
- ☐ Rentals (housing lease, etc.)
- ☐ Loans (personal loans, home loans, student loans, car loans, etc.)
- ☐ Debts
- ☐ Mortgages



Cancel Travel Plans

- ☐ Contact airline / travel agency to cancel flights
- ☐ Contact accommodations
- ☐ Contact travel agency to cancel travel packages



Assess & Claim Assets

- ☐ File insurance claims
- ☐ Retrieve funds from safety deposit box (if any, inquire at bank)
- ☐ CPF matters
- ☐ Check for shares, bonds, or other investments tied to deceased



Transferring Ownership Of Assets

- ☐ Property (e.g. HDB)
- ☐ Change name for utility account
- ☐ Sort deceased's personal items
- ☐ Vehicle (e.g. car, motorcycle)
- ☐ Inform school or workplace to collect deceased's personal belongings

Others

- ☐ File tax returns on deceased's behalf
- ☐ Close or memorialise social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

Available Resources



Death Administration Guides In Four Languages

<https://mylegacy.life.gov.sg/when-death-happens/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)



Pro-Bono Legal Services

<https://www.probono.sg/get-legal-help/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)



Emotional Support

Samaritans of Singapore

<https://www.sos.org.sg/our-services/>

(Accurate as of 27/08/2025)

- Suicide bereavement counselling
- Suicide bereavement support groups
 - Healing Within support group
 - Healing Bridge support group

Healing Within

An Online Structured
6-session Support Group
for Suicide Loss Survivors



When you lose someone you love to
suicide, the pain can feel unbearable.



But you don't have to
navigate your pain alone.



Healing Within is a 6-session online structured support group for suicide loss survivors. It provides a safe and supportive space to share, learn, and heal alongside others who have similar experiences. Together, we'll explore ways to cope with grief and honour our loved ones while finding strength in community.

About SOS

Samaritans of Singapore Limited (SOS) is a secular, non-profit suicide prevention centre. Since its establishment in 1969, SOS has developed into a professionally run and managed organisation. It adopts a holistic approach to suicide-related topics, focusing on prevention, intervention and postvention, an intervention conducted after a suicide for loved ones and friends. With the mission to be an available lifeline to anyone in crisis, SOS offers emotional support to people in crisis, thinking of suicide, or affected by suicide. All information shared with SOS is treated as confidential and people can choose to remain anonymous.

24-hour Hotline: 1767

24-hour CareText: 9151 1767 (via WhatsApp)

For more information, please visit www.sos.org.sg.

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Healing Bridge

An In-person Monthly Support Group
for Suicide Loss Survivors

How do I find my footing again after losing someone I love to suicide?

Healing Bridge is an open support group dedicated to providing a safe and supportive environment for individuals navigating the challenges of suicide grief and loss. This group offers a compassionate space to share emotions, find comfort, and build resilience together. There are no fixed topics covered in this programme. New members can join the group any time, as participants share their struggles and find ways to support one another in their grief journeys.

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How Does Healing Bridge Work?

Facilitated Sessions

Facilitated by **Healing Companions** to ensure a safe and supportive environment.

A trained SOS volunteer who has personally lost someone to suicide and now supports others also experiencing the pain of suicide bereavement.

Open Group Format

Join at any time; no long-term commitment required.

No Fixed Topics

Each session is shaped by participants' needs and emotions.

At Healing Bridge, you will:

- Connect with others who understand your pain.
- Express your emotions in a judgement-free space.
- Receive support as you navigate your healing journey.
- Find ways to honour your loved one while caring for yourself.

Take the first step towards healing.

Grief can feel isolating, but you don't have to go through it alone. Healing Bridge offers a safe space where you can share, listen, and find comfort in the company of those who have similar lived experiences.



Register your interest for
Healing Bridge via this QR code
or visit: bit.ly/HealingBridge

Information accurate as of May 2025

When

Last Friday of
Every Month

Time

7pm to 9pm

Venue

Samaritans of Singapore
169 Jalan Bukit Merah
#03-20 Connection One
Tower 2
Singapore 150169

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of Singapore

