

We understand this is a difficult and overwhelming time for you and your family. We've created this guide to help simplify the account settlement process and help you work through the steps.

We've also provided some information for various scenarios (e.g., beneficiary (POD) accounts, estate accounts, probate, etc.), how each is handled and what documentation will be needed. A list of frequently asked questions is included as well. Please contact us when you're ready – we're here to help.

### **Account Settlement**

Once you've contacted us, you will be working with a small group of staff members who are specially trained to help you through the process. They will review the affected accounts, determine next steps and keep you updated on the documentation and information we may need from you. Below is a list of contact information:

#### **Accounts with no loans**

800.562.0999 x10402

#### **Accounts with loans (including Visa cards and lines of credit)**

800.893.7689 x19027

#### **Contact Center**

800.562.0999

If you are uncertain about what accounts are involved, you can also call our Contact Center and they will be happy to connect you with the correct department.

**The following is for informational purposes only. WSECU cannot provide legal counsel or advice. If you are the executor or administrator of the estate, please consult with an attorney, financial adviser or probate court official for specific concerns or questions regarding your responsibilities, the probate process or estate settlement.**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q. Who is allowed access to information about the affected accounts and loans?**

A. By law, we are only permitted to provide account information to joint accountholders, court-appointed representatives of the estate or government agencies.

### **Q. I have a Power of Attorney – am I allowed to access or receive information on the affected accounts?**

A. Only if you are a joint accountholder or have been appointed the executor or personal representative of the estate. A Power of Attorney is null and void at this juncture.

### **Q. How long should the affected WSECU accounts remain open?**

A. While there is no deadline, we recommend settling the accounts as soon as possible. We are required to continue reporting account information to the IRS under the decedent's Social Security Number until the affected accounts are closed or transferred to the new accountholder's name. By settling the accounts as quickly as possible, you can avoid complications with the IRS.

### **Q. What happens to federal benefits (e.g., Social Security, SSI or VA) that have been directly deposited into the account?**

A. If any federal benefits are deposited to the account after the date of the decedent's passing, we are required to return the funds. If this is the case, we will handle it for you; no action will be needed on your part.

### **Q. Should I notify the applicable agencies?**

A. Yes, you should notify any agency or entity that is depositing benefits into the account as soon as possible. Please see the last page of this guide for phone numbers of federal agencies. You should also notify any employers who are paying out retirement or pension benefits as well.

**Q. What should be done if automatic payments are being taken from the affected accounts?**

A. Please notify the creditors/payees that are debiting the accounts and advise them that the account is being closed and automatic payments must be stopped.

**Q. I'm a joint owner on an affected account. Can I still conduct business on it?**

A. If the account is classified as a joint account with survivorship, you can continue to do business on the account. However, if the account is classified as joint account, no survivorship, no business should be conducted after the date of death.

**Q. If all the affected accounts are in the decedent's name only, how can they be accessed?**

If there is no joint owner, or if the account is classified as joint account, no survivorship, the funds will be disbursed as determined by affidavit (see Definitions) or by court order according to regulations of the member's home state. A court appointed executor or personal administrator can open an Estate Account for the purpose of settling the deceased's affairs.

**Q. I am a joint owner on an affected account and have my own debit card. What should I do?**

A. You have two options: you can cancel the card or continue to use it until the account is closed or transferred into your name. Once the account is closed, all associated cards will be deactivated. If the account is transferred into your name, you will be issued a new card.

**Q. If I am the appointed administrator/executor of the estate, will I have full access to the account information, even if I am not a signer on the affected account(s)?**

A. Yes. Once you've provided us with court documents that states you are handling the estate, you will be entitled to all account information.

**DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS**

**Q. How are funds disbursed on beneficiary (POD) accounts?**

A. These accounts have beneficiaries designated at the time the account is opened. If there is a sole signer on the account, the account is closed and the funds disbursed to the beneficiaries. If there is a joint signer, he or she is entitled to the funds. These accounts are not subject to probate or the terms of a trust.

**Q. How are Trust Accounts handled?**

A. Management of a Trust Account and disbursement of funds are dictated by the legal trust document. These accounts are not subject to probate.

**Q. How are Money Market Accounts handled?**

A. Money Market Accounts are the same as other deposits accounts and will be settled as dictated by the will, estate or trust.

**Q. How are certificate accounts handled?**

A. For joint accounts with survivorship, the joint owner can:

- Cash out the certificate account without penalty
- Establish a new certificate account at current dividend rates and terms
- Transfer the certificate account at the current rate and term to his/her own WSECU account.

For joint accounts with no survivorship, the funds will be disbursed to the estate or the next of kin.

**Q. How are IRAs (Individual Retirement Accounts) handled?**

A. The IRA will be closed without penalty and the funds distributed to the spouse or designated beneficiaries. There are several distribution options and we will be happy to review them with you. If you are the recipient of the funds, we strongly suggest consulting with your tax adviser to determine the best option for you.

**LOANS, VISA AND LINES OF CREDIT****Q: If the loans were solely in the decedent's name, who is responsible for them?**

A. The estate is responsible for repaying any outstanding loan balances. If there is an executor appointed to handle the estate, he/she will be responsible for ensuring the loans are paid. If the estate is insolvent and/or there is no joint borrower, we will research the options.

**Q. If there is a joint owner/borrower, is he or she now responsible for the loans?**

A. Yes. In these cases, we will transfer the loans to the joint borrower's name.

**Q. Can WSECU use the funds in the decedent's savings or checking accounts to repay the loans?**

A. Yes. By law, financial institutions have the right to the funds (called a lien) on any account on which the decedent was the primary accountholder and may use those funds toward repayment of the loans the decedent held.

**Q. Can the loan collateral (e.g., a vehicle) be given to another person?**

A. Re-assignment or transference of loans and their collateral to a person who is not a joint borrower is not permitted unless we (WSECU) give written authorization to do so. Executors, administrators and personal representatives cannot grant a security interest in, transfer, or assign any loan collateral to anyone other than WSECU without our written consent.

**Q. I am a co-borrower/cardholder on the affected Visa account. What are the next steps?**

A. There are two choices: you can either close the Visa account or transfer it to your name and continue to use it. Please note that you are responsible for repaying any outstanding balances.

**Q. What should I do with the decedent's Visa card if he/she was the sole borrower?**

A. Please destroy the card or return it to WSECU. Any card tied to the affected account will be deactivated.

**Q. If I am an authorized card user on the affected account, am I responsible for repaying the balance?  
Can I still use the card?**

A. Authorized users are not liable for the outstanding balance, nor can they continue to access the credit line. Please destroy the card or return it to us.

**Q. What if there is Payment Protection on the loan or Visa card? Should I continue to make payments?**

A. Please do not make any payments until the benefits and outstanding liabilities are determined. A claim will need to be filed to make these determinations and we can assist you with this. Please note that interest will continue to accrue until the balance is paid in full.

## GENERAL FAQS

### **Q. How do I establish an Estate Account?**

A. WSECU offers estate accounts to existing membership and executors and personal representatives that qualify for membership.

The following items will be needed to open an Estate Account:

- A certified copy of the death certificate
- Court documents designating the executor/administrator
- An Employee Identification Number (EIN) for the estate

The EIN can be obtained by filing form SS-4 with the IRS. You can find this form at:

- The IRS website – [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)
- Your local library
- Your local post office

You will need to complete an Estate/Trust Account card with us. We will be happy to provide one to you or you can stop by any WSECU branch to open the account. Please bring the items listed above with you.

### **Q. How do I reach the Social Security Administration concerning survivor benefits?**

A. You can reach the Social Security Administration by calling 800.772.1213. You will need to provide:

- A certified copy of the death certificate
- The Social Security Number of the decedent
- The name of the decedent's employer
- The decedent's most recent W-2 forms or tax return if self-employed
- Certified or original birth certificates of the spouse and minor children
- Divorce papers (if the divorced spouse is applying)

## DEFINITIONS

### **Affidavit**

A notarized, sworn, written declaration made before a judge of the court or notary public. The affidavit states that there was no estate established according to the bylaws of the state in which the decedent resided. It also states who is entitled to the funds, such as a surviving spouse or child or sole heir according to a will. The affidavit should also list account numbers and account values and release WSECU (and any other financial institution) from all responsibility once the funds are disbursed.

### **Estate Account**

An Estate Account consists of a savings and checking account. Typically, the decedent's assets are deposited into savings and transferred to checking as needed for payment of taxes, debts and other obligations during the estate settlement process.

### **Probate**

Probate is the process by which the court determines the authenticity of a will. It is designed to protect the family and ensure that those entitled receive the assets. It also ensures all debts and taxes are paid.

The court will use the will – if one exists – to determine who is to be appointed executor of the estate. If there is no will, the court will appoint a personal representative; usually a spouse or relative.

The following documentation may be required by the courts for probate:

- A certified copy of the death certificate
- A will (if one exists)
- A summary of the estate's assets
- Proof of marriage if the decedent was your spouse
- Disclosure of any prior marriages of the decedent
- Contact information for all heirs, next of kin and beneficiaries

The size and complexity of the estate and state probate laws will determine how long the process will take. It is best to consult with an attorney to determine what property is or is not subject to probate.

### **Reclamation**

Reclamation is the order by a state or federal authority for the return of benefits paid. In the event the funds are not available in the account, WSECU may pursue the estate, joint accountholder or other responsible parties for reimbursement.

### **Trusts**

There are several types of trust accounts, including Living Trusts, Revocable Trusts and Irrevocable Trust. Accounts are established and adhered to according to the legal name of a trust. Trusts are established by an attorney and include the designation of trustees and successor trustees as applicable.

**Duties of an Executor**

An executor, also known as a personal representative or administrator, is responsible for carrying out the instructions provided in the will. If you are named executor/administrator, it is your responsibility to pay debts or obligations, distribute the remaining assets and complete the necessary tax forms.

**Executor Checklist**

- File the will and initiate probate. As executor/administrator you will need to file a will with the appropriate state probate court and petition the court for Letters of Testamentary or Letters of Administration. These documents provide legal proof that you are the executor of the estate and will enable you to handle transactions regarding the estate. You may want to request several certified copies of these court documents as they may be requested to handle certain financial transactions regarding the estate.
- Request several copies of the certified death certificate as you will need them to conduct estate business. They can be obtained from the state department of health or the funeral director may order them for you.
- Re-title property if necessary. If the estate include unencumbered automobiles, boats, other vehicles, or real estate you can transfer titles to the named beneficiary or to yourself as executor. If there is no beneficiary, you may elect to sell the property and add the proceeds to the estate. Seek the advice of an attorney before you decided to sell or re-title property.
- Notify all creditors of the death and invite them to submit claims to the estate. Each state sets a time limit for creditors to submit claims. Some things to look for include:
  - Utility bills
  - Hospital, doctor or other medical bills
  - Loan payments
  - Credit card payments or bills
- Close any credit union, bank and brokerage accounts that are solely owned by the decedent. Open an estate account and transfer the assets to the account, which will allow you to settle the decedent’s bills and other obligations.
- Locate insurance policies and file claims. You will need the policy numbers, full name of the decedent and certified copies of the death certificate. (If there is a WSECU loan with life insurance, we will be glad to file the claim for you.
- Federal taxes (and state taxes if applicable) for the decedent will need to be filed for the year in which he or she passed away. Consult the IRS or a CPA for assistance.
- Once all debts and obligations have been paid, you can distribute the remaining assets to the designated beneficiaries and close the account.
- Once settlement is complete, WSECU will provide the administrator with a summary letter of all actions taken.

**We hope this guide has been of assistance to you. Please feel free to contact us at any time. We are here to help!**

**Website**  
wsecu.org

**Contact Center - General questions**  
800.562.0999  
7:00am - 7:00pm M-F; 9:00am-2:00pm Sat

**Accounts without loans**  
800.562.0999 x10402 – Account Services

**Accounts with loans**  
800.893.7689 x19027 – Member Solutions

**Mailing address**  
WSECU  
Deceased Accounts  
PO Box WSECU  
Olympia, WA 98507