

What gets done during the settlement of an estate?

- Estate tax returns are prepared
- Estate taxes - determine if any have been paid and if any are owed
- Income tax returns are prepared and income tax is paid or refund is claimed
- Debts are paid
- Distribution of money, items/things and responsibilities

What do I need to do?

- Make sure you have enough cash available to pay bills and expenses during the estate settlement process. It may take several months to a year before everything is settled and all assets are available
- Get help and guidance. You may be best served by hiring an estate and probate attorney licensed in the state in which your spouse resided
- Collect all the documents your attorney will need to settle the estate.

Documents:

- Wills, trusts and letters of instruction
 - Deeds to real estate
 - Titles for boats and automobiles
 - Most recent account statements for all accounts (either in joint name or in your spouse's name)
 - Bank statements
 - Brokerage statements
 - Credit union accounts
 - Pension and retirement account statements
 - Loans, contracts, and partnership papers
 - Employee benefits paperwork
- File the final income tax returns. It may be best to hire an accountant to complete and file the final income tax returns. The documents you will need include:
 - Previous tax returns
 - Pay stubs and income information
 - Bank, brokerage, and credit union account statements

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