

How do you announce a death, and who do you tell first?

Key facts

- No federal or state law requires you to announce a death publicly at all. The only death-related notice with a legal deadline is the probate court's notice to creditors, and that is a separate, later step set by each state (Nolo, checked 2026-09-22; see our death notification template).
- AARP's checklist recommends reaching close contacts first by "a group text or mass email, or... individual phone calls," then asking them to spread the word, before informing neighbors, coworkers or social groups, and contacting the employer "right away so they can handle payroll matters and workload" (AARP, checked 2026-09-25).
- "SSA only accepts reports of death by phone or in person," never online or by email, and a funeral director usually files it for the family using Form SSA-721 (Statement of Death by Funeral Director) (USA.gov; Social Security Administration, checked 2026-09-25).
- Facebook's memorialization request needs the profile's web address and proof of death, such as an obituary or news article; anyone can submit it (Facebook Help Center, checked 2026-09-20).
- Identity thieves read obituaries and death announcements for details like a full birth date, address or a mother's maiden name, the same details many companies use as security-question answers (Experian, checked 2026-09-25).
- The American Academy of Pediatrics, via HealthyChildren.org, warns against vague phrases like "gone to sleep (or gone on a long journey)" with young children, since preschoolers think literally, and says plainly that "once people die, their body stops working permanently" (HealthyChildren.org, checked 2026-09-25).
- LinkedIn lets anyone reporting a death ask that a member's profile be memorialized, but closing the account instead requires a certified death certificate plus a court document, such as letters testamentary or letters of administration, naming the requester as the estate's authorized representative (LinkedIn Help Center, checked 2026-09-29).

Step-by-step checklist for announcing a death

- ☐ List immediate family and closest friends who must be told directly
- ☐ Call or visit immediate family and closest friends first, by phone or in person
- ☐ Ask one or two trusted relatives to help notify their own branch of the family or friend group
- ☐ Contact the deceased's employer right away
- ☐ Notify neighbors, coworkers, and social or faith groups, by call, text or email
- ☐ Draft a short social media post; hold it until close family and friends already know
- ☐ Post on social media, on your account and the deceased's if you have access
- ☐ Decide whether to request Facebook memorialization, and gather proof of death for the request
- ☐ Keep a written list of who has been told, so no one is missed or told twice

☐ Publish an obituary or death notice once service details are confirmed

<https://omliva.com/guides/how-to-announce-a-death/> | Checked 2026-09-29