

## **A MESSAGE FROM SOCIAL SECURITY**

Your funeral director is helping the Social Security office by giving you this information about Social Security benefits. If the deceased was receiving benefits, you need to contact us to report the death. If you think you may be eligible for survivors benefits, you should contact us to apply.

## **HOW SOCIAL SECURITY HELPS FAMILIES**

Social Security survivors benefits help ease the financial burden that follows a worker's death. Almost all children under age 18 will get monthly benefits if a working parent dies. Other family members may be eligible for benefits too.

Anyone who has worked and paid Social Security (FICA) taxes has been earning Social Security benefits for his or her family. The amount of work needed to pay survivors benefits depends on the worker's age at the time of death. It may be as little as 1-1/2 years for a young worker. No one needs more than 10 years.

## **WHO CAN GET SURVIVORS BENEFITS?**

Here is a list of family members who usually can get benefits:

- Widows and widowers age 60 or older.
- Widows and widowers at any age if caring for the deceased's child(ren) who are under age 16 or disabled.
- Divorced wives and husbands age 60 or older, if married to the deceased 10 years or more.
- Widows, widowers, divorced wives, and divorced husbands age 50 or older, if they are disabled.
- Children up to age 18.
- Children age 18 - 19, if they attend elementary school or high school full time.
- Children over age 18, if they became disabled before age 22.
- The deceased worker's parents age 62 or older, if they were being supported by the worker.

## **A SPECIAL ONE-TIME PAYMENT**

In addition to the monthly benefits for family members, a one-time payment of \$255 can be paid to a spouse who was living with the worker at the time of death. If there is none, it can be paid to:

- A spouse who is eligible for benefits.
- A child or children eligible for benefits.

This payment cannot be made if there is no eligible spouse or child.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR BENEFITS**

How you sign up for Social Security benefits depends on whether or not you are getting other Social Security benefits.

If you aren't getting Social Security benefits, you can apply for benefits by telephone or by going to any Social Security office. You may need some of the documents shown on the list below. But don't delay your application because you don't have all the information. If you don't have a document you need, Social Security can help you get it.

## **HOW TO APPLY FOR BENEFITS (continued)**

If you're already getting benefits as a wife or husband on your spouse's record when he or she dies, in many situations we can change your payments to survivors benefits once you report the death to us. Benefits for any children will also automatically be changed to survivors benefits after the death is reported to us.

### **INFORMATION NEEDED**

- Your Social Security number and the deceased worker's Social Security number.
- A death certificate. (Generally, the funeral director provides a statement that can be used for this purpose.)
- Proof of the deceased worker's earnings for last year (W-2 forms or self-employment tax return).
- Your birth certificate.
- A marriage certificate, if you are applying for benefits as a widow, widower, divorced wife, or divorced husband.
- A divorce decree, if you are applying for benefits as a divorced wife or husband.
- Children's birth certificates and Social Security numbers, if applying for children's benefits.
- Your checking or savings account information, if you want direct deposit of your benefits.

You will need to submit original documents or copies certified by the issuing office. You can mail or bring them to the office. Social Security will make photocopies and return your documents.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)**

If you are 65 or older, disabled, or blind, ask the Social Security representative about Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks for people with limited income and resources. If you receive SSI, you may also qualify for Medicaid, food stamps, and other social services.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information, write or visit any Social Security office, or phone the toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213. You can speak to a representative weekdays 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. You can also visit Social Security's Internet website: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

### **A REMINDER**

If the deceased was receiving Social Security benefits, any checks which arrive after death will need to be returned to the Social Security office. If Social Security checks were being directly deposited into a bank account, the bank needs to be notified of the death, too.