

# Estate Administration Process Checklist

*A General Timeline for Estate Administration in New York State*

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## **How to Use This Checklist**

Estate administration follows a sequence. While every estate is different, most move through similar phases. This checklist outlines the typical progression so you understand what to expect and can track where things stand. Complete items as they apply to your situation.

## **1: Initial Stabilization**

The first phase focuses on securing property and confirming the next legal steps.

- Secure residence and valuables
- Locate original Will
- Order certified death certificates
- Schedule consultation to determine probate requirements
- Identify immediate bills necessary to protect property (insurance, utilities)

## Notes

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## 2: Court Appointment and Setup

Before managing estate assets, legal authority must be established.

- File petition with Surrogate's Court (if required)
- Obtain Letters Testamentary / Letters of Administration
- Apply for estate EIN
- Open an estate bank account
- Notify relevant financial institutions

### Notes

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### 3: Asset Identification and Valuation

This phase creates a clear financial picture of the estate.

- Identify probate assets
- Identify non-probate assets (retirement accounts, life insurance, joint accounts)
- Obtain date-of-death values
- Arrange appraisals (real estate, valuables)
- Create a working inventory of estate assets

#### Notes

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## 4: Creditor and Tax Review

Proper handling of debts and taxes protects both the estate and the Executor.

- Identify known creditors
- Determine whether notice to creditors is required
- Confirm priority of payments
- File final income tax return (Form 1040)
- Determine whether an estate income tax return (Form 1041) is required
- Determine whether an estate tax return is required

### Notes

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## 5. Accounting and Distribution

Distributions occur only after obligations are addressed.

- Prepare a detailed accounting of estate activity
- Provide accounting to beneficiaries
- Obtain signed Receipts & Releases
- Distribute remaining estate assets
- Close estate formally (if required)
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## Notes

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For guidance before taking major action, contact:

Law Offices of Edward J. Gorman, Esq., PLLC  
518-686-4331 | [www.ejglaw.com](http://www.ejglaw.com)

## Important Reminders

- Do not mix estate funds with personal funds
- Do not make early distributions
- Do not sell assets without understanding tax consequences
- When unsure, seek guidance before acting
- Close the estate formally (if required)

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