

# Five Things You Must Know NOW Before Someone Dies

Whether a death is expected or a total surprise, you need certain pieces of information about the people you love in order to fill out a death certificate.

Keep this information on file to make it easier to move through the end-of-life formalities required by federal and state governments.



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**1 SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:** Sure, you know your own Social Security number, and you probably know the numbers for your spouse/partner and kids. But do you have access to the numbers for your parents, your siblings, or other relatives if you were called upon to take care of their final arrangements?

**2 MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME:** This may seem simple, but over the course of time, you may lose track of each of your parents' mothers' maiden name or spelling. For example, while reconfirming with my dad about his mother's last name, oops, I had misspelled it!

**3 PLACE OF BIRTH:** Of course, you know where you were born. But do your spouse/partner and kids know? Do you know your parents' birthplaces? If you moved around a lot as a kid, were your siblings born in different cities? Just as the birthplace city and state is important on a birth certificate, it's vital for a death certificate.

**4 VETERAN INFORMATION:** Those who served in the U.S. military can get free burial benefits for both a veteran and

spouse, including a burial plot, headstone, and military funeral services. The benefit can also cover dependent minors. You'll need to provide the veteran's service number, military branch, wars fought, service time and discharge information. Do you know where that information is kept?

**5 ONLINE PASSWORDS:** This isn't needed for death certificates, but with so much of our lives online protected by passwords, when someone dies, if you don't know his/her passwords, you may not be able to access or shut down any online or cell phone accounts. Internet Service Providers will not give you this information unless you present a death certificate for the account holder. Make a master list of your online passwords and their associated accounts for future reference.

Keep this information with your will, advance medical directives, insurance information and other important documents. Download a free planning form from [www.AGoodGoodbye.com](http://www.AGoodGoodbye.com) and get it together today!

## About Gail Rubin

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Gail Rubin, The Doyenne of Death®, is the author of *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die* and hosts the television program of the same name. A Certified Funeral Celebrant, she uses funny films to help start serious funeral planning conversations. Gail speaks at national, state and regional conventions, as well as to church and community groups.

As the author of "Matchings, Hatchings and Dispatchings," an *Albuquerque Tribune* column on life cycle events, she found that the columns on death elicited the greatest reader response, indicating a pressing need for information on the topic. Gail started The Family Plot Blog (<http://TheFamilyPlot.wordpress.com>), a chipper online resource to provide the information, inspiration and tools to pre-plan a healing and meaningful funeral or memorial service.

Many people are shocked to discover how expensive funerals can be. Gail became a licensed insurance agent to help people fund their "good goodbyes" by introducing them to the concept of final expense insurance.

Gail is a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association. She is the Vice President of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue of New Mexico. She volunteers with the *Chevra Kaddisha*, a group that ritually prepares the bodies of Jews for burial, as well as the cemetery committee for Congregation Albert synagogue in Albuquerque, NM.

A breast cancer survivor who began her cancer journey in the summer of 2008, Gail observes, "Nothing reminds you of your own mortality like a brush with something as serious and transforming as cancer."

Gail has been quoted in funeral planning articles in *Money* magazine, *Kiplinger's Retirement Report*, *BankRate.com* and in numerous newspapers. Articles by and about her have appeared in *The Albuquerque Journal*, *New Mexico Magazine*, *Albuquerque The Magazine*, *ICCFA Magazine*, *Texas Director*, *Catholic Digest*, *Momentum Magazine*, *The New Mexico Jewish Link*, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, *Prime Time*, and other publications.

A native of the Washington, D.C. area, she is a graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, and Montgomery College, Rockville, MD.