

Notifying DSL

If you or your organization is dealing with a deceased individual who has no known heirs or a valid will – *even if you only suspect this to be the case* – you are required by Oregon law to contact the Estates Program in the Oregon Department of State Lands within 48 hours.

Estates Coordinator Oregon Department of State Lands

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The estates coordinator will gladly arrange for Estates Program presentations to businesses and professional organizations.



Oregon's Estates Program

*Administering estates
for persons who have
died without a will or
known heir.*



12-06



**OREGON DEPARTMENT OF
STATE LANDS**



Oregon's Estates Program – Protecting, Administering and Locating

Oregon law requires the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) to be notified within 48 hours upon the death of a person when it appears there are no known heirs or a valid will. This notification may be provided by a variety of sources, including county medical examiners, landlords, nursing home administrators, hospitals, funeral homes, law enforcement agencies, neighbors, friends and attorneys.

Upon notification of such a death, DSL's Estates Program staff take immediate steps to protect the assets and to search for a valid will and heirs. This includes securing the deceased's residence and possessions, as well as safeguarding photographs and other items with sentimental value. DSL also makes arrangements for the decedent's remains and acts on behalf of the deceased to close out all personal affairs.

DSL diligently seeks to reunite the estate with rightful heirs. If the search for heirs is unsuccessful, the Department is appointed in the appropriate court as personal representative to administer the estate. DSL protects the property from any unlawful attempts by others to claim the deceased's assets. Our responsibilities include maintaining an inventory of real and personal property, and selling or managing assets in a manner that best benefits the estate. Creditors are paid from the estate's trust account.

Missing Heirs

In cases where some heirs are located but others cannot be found, DSL acts to protect the interest of "missing" heirs legally entitled to a portion of an estate's assets. In these cases, DSL acts as the legal representative and safeguards those assets until the missing heir can be located.

Common School Fund

All assets from estates are held in trust in the Common School Fund (CSF) for 10 years, and are available for claim by proven heirs during this time period. If there is no claim within 10 years, the assets are permanently deposited into the CSF and are no longer available for claim.

The CSF is a constitutional fund dedicated to Oregon's K-12 public schools. Earnings from the fund are distributed twice annually to the state's 198 school districts. Since statehood, at which time the fund was established, hundreds of millions of dollars have benefited Oregon schoolchildren. In 2006 the CSF reached a billion dollars, and distributions totaled more than \$45 million.

"After having a tenant, with no apparent heirs, die in one of my apartments, I was left in a state of limbo. I was eventually directed to DSL's Estates Program, and within two days, two program staff met me at the apartment in Grants Pass. They couldn't have been more helpful, and I was amazed by their courtesy and efficiency."

Neil Randall, Grants Pass