



Social media accounts, email, cloud photo libraries, payment apps, gaming libraries, and subscriptions do not stop simply because someone has died by suicide. Each platform has its own rules for memorializing, closing, or transferring an account, and some of those rules are more time sensitive than families realize. This handout draws on peer facilitation experience to help survivors and the clinicians or friends supporting them work through these decisions with intention rather than letting a platform default, a well meaning friend, or a forgotten subscription decide first.

A Note Before You Start

This handout is not legal advice and is not comprehensive. It is a starting point for a process that is often confusing, slow, and emotional. Platform policies change and vary by country. Always confirm current requirements directly with each company, and consult a qualified attorney for anything involving an estate, a will, or legal access to accounts. See the full site disclaimer at sunflowersaftersuicide.com/disclaimer/ before making decisions based on this handout.

What Is Time Sensitive

- Google deletes a personal account after two years of inactivity, which can erase Gmail, Google Photos, and Drive files if no one has signed in and no Inactive Account Manager was set up.
- Subscription and streaming services keep charging a card on file every month until someone calls to cancel, and a bank or credit card statement going back two or three months is the fastest way to find them.
- A friend or distant acquaintance can report a death to Facebook or Instagram before the family is ready, which limits the family's later say in memorializing versus deleting the account.
- An open, unmanaged account is also a target for hackers, who can use a person's name and friend list to run scams on the people who trusted them.

What You Can Do Without a Password

- Facebook, Instagram, X, Google, and Apple all accept a notification only request with a death certificate and proof of relationship, even with no password and no prior access to the account.
- Notification can close or memorialize an account, but it does not release the messages or photos stored inside it, which generally requires a password already on hand, a Legacy Contact arrangement, or a court order.
- A law called RUFADAA gives an executor or court appointed representative legal standing to request digital account content. Most states, including New Jersey, have adopted their own version of this law.

The Major Platforms

- Facebook offers memorialization or deletion, and a Legacy Contact named before death can accept new friend requests on the memorialized profile, while one added by the family after the death cannot.
- Instagram offers memorialization or removal through a request form and has no Legacy Contact feature of its own, while Apple's Legacy Contact program requires an access key set up in advance.
- Without an Apple access key, families generally need a court order for data access, though Apple ID deletion alone only requires a death certificate.
- X only offers deactivation, never memorialization, and will not provide login access to anyone regardless of relationship to the person who died.
- Microsoft accounts, including Outlook email and Xbox profiles, can be closed through a Next of Kin process, though releasing the actual emails or files generally requires a subpoena or court order.

Smaller Platforms Worth Remembering

- TikTok and Reddit have no formal deceased account process at all, which means the only realistic option on TikTok is contacting general support, and on Reddit there is nowhere to even point a request.
- Snapchat will delete an account on request with a death certificate but has no memorialization option, since the platform was built around content meant to disappear rather than be kept.
- Pinterest will deactivate an account when notified of a death, with no option to preserve or memorialize it, and LinkedIn allows a closure request from someone authorized to act on the deceased person's behalf.
- A school email or workplace account follows a different set of rules entirely, since a registrar or human resources department, not a tech company, controls that access.

Money, Gaming, and Two Factor Authentication

- PayPal and Venmo require an executor or estate administrator with a death certificate before releasing or closing an account, and any remaining balance is paid out by check or transfer, never simply handed over.
- Cryptocurrency held in a personal wallet has no company to call, since without the written seed phrase the funds are permanently and irretrievably inaccessible to anyone, including the family.
- Gaming accounts on Steam, PlayStation, Xbox, and Nintendo are non transferable by their own terms of service, though designating a household home console before a death can let family keep playing the games already installed there.
- If a deceased person's phone number was the two factor verification method on a shared account, family members can find themselves locked out of their own access too, simply because the verification code has nowhere left to go.

After the Decision Is Made

- A memorialized account stops sending birthday reminders and stops suggesting the profile in places like people you may know, and content stays visible only to the audience it already had.
- No one, including a Legacy Contact, can log into a memorialized account to change it, though friends may still be able to leave tributes or tag photos depending on privacy settings.
- Family members often disagree about memorializing versus deleting an account, and slowing the decision down to ask what each person is afraid of losing helps more than letting whoever feels strongest decide for everyone.

Source

<https://sunflowersaftersuicide.com/digital-legacy-after-suicide-loss/>