

CALIFORNIA TRUST ADMINISTRATION CHECKLIST

For Successor Trustees After Death of Settlor

**This is a tool, not legal advice*

Trustee Information

Trust Name: _____

Date of Death: _____

Successor Trustee: _____

Attorney (if any): _____

CPA (if any): _____

PHASE 1: IMMEDIATE ACTION ITEMS

- Obtain multiple certified copies of the death certificate
- Locate original trust document and all amendments
- Confirm appointment as successor trustee
- Secure real property and valuables
- Forward mail
- Arrange funeral/burial (if applicable)
- Order date-of-death asset statements

Notes:

PHASE 2: REVIEW TRUST & LEGAL DUTIES

- Review trust distribution terms
- Identify all beneficiaries and heirs-at-law
- Calendar notice deadlines
- Understand fiduciary duties under the California Probate Code
- Determine if subtrusts must be created

Notes:

PHASE 3: REQUIRED NOTICES (Probate Code §16061.7)

- Prepare statutory notification
- Send notice to beneficiaries and heirs
- Retain proof of mailing
- Calendar 120-day contest deadline

Date Notices Sent: _____

PHASE 4: TAX ID & FINANCIAL SETUP

- Apply for EIN (IRS)
- Open trust administration bank account
- Transfer liquid assets into trust account
- Stop use of decedent's Social Security number

EIN: _____

Trust Bank: _____

PHASE 5: INVENTORY & ASSET MANAGEMENT

- Identify all trust assets
- Confirm proper title in trust name
- Obtain date-of-death values (this may include appraisals)
- Secure and insure real property
- Record Affidavit of Death of Trustee (if needed)

Real Property Address(es):

Estimated Total Asset Value: _____

PHASE 6: CREDITOR CLAIMS & DEBTS

- Identify known debts
- Notify creditors (if applicable)
- Pay valid debts

- Resolve final expenses (mortgage, utilities, credit cards, medical bills)
- Maintain reserve for unknown liabilities

Notes:

PHASE 7: TAX FILINGS

- File final Form 1040 (individual income tax)
- File Form 1041 (trust income tax return)
- Determine if Form 706 (estate tax return) is required
- Address property tax reassessment issues
- Pay taxes due

CPA Contact: _____

PHASE 8: ACCOUNTING

- Prepare detailed accounting of income and expenses
- Provide accounting to beneficiaries (unless waived)
- Obtain written approval or receipt and release

Accounting Period: _____

PHASE 9: DISTRIBUTIONS

- Confirm debts and taxes paid or reserved
- Follow trust distribution instructions
- Transfer assets to beneficiaries
- Obtain signed receipts and releases

Distribution Date(s): _____

PHASE 10: FINALIZATION

- Prepare final accounting
- Distribute remaining reserve
- Close trust bank account
- Retain records (3–5 years minimum recommended)

Date Trust Closed: _____

Important Reminders

A trustee has personal fiduciary liability. When in doubt, consult a qualified California trusts and estates attorney and CPA before making distributions.