



# Claims Frequently Asked Questions

## Can I download claims forms?

Yes, they are available to download at [Americo.com](http://Americo.com).

## How does the claims process work? What steps do I need to take?

1. You can obtain a claim package from [www.americo.com](http://www.americo.com), which has comprehensive instructions on how to submit a claim. Although it is not required, you can call us at 800-231-0801 and notify us of the insured person's passing. If you have not obtained the claim package from [www.americo.com](http://www.americo.com), we will send the necessary claim documents with instructions to the contact person. To prepare, gather the following information: Policy number, Name of Insured (Decedent), Date of Birth of Insured (Decedent), Date of Death and Beneficiary(ies) name(s). The beneficiary's(ies') address, date of birth, and Social Security Number will be needed.
2. To begin processing the claim for benefits, we need the following documentation and forms completed and returned by the beneficiary:
  - **CLAIMANT'S STATEMENT** *Note: Must be signed by the beneficiary and witnessed by a disinterested party or payment may be delayed. The Claimant's Statement does not need to be notarized. A disinterested witness is a person that doesn't have a financial interest in the claim, such as a friend or co-worker, etc.*
  - **CERTIFIED COPY OF THE DEATH CERTIFICATE** for the insured that identifies both cause and manner of death. *Note: We cannot accept a photocopied death certificate for the insured person. A "certified" death certificate will have a "raised/embossed" or colored seal on the front. Generally, only one copy of the certified death certificate is necessary, even in the case of multiple beneficiaries. If any primary beneficiary pre-deceased the insured, we will require a photocopy of that beneficiary's death certificate. Death certificates become part of the file and cannot be returned.*
  - **ORIGINAL INSURANCE POLICY** *Note: Please be sure to mark the Claimant's Statement where indicated if the policy is lost. If the claim is on a rider and the policy still provides coverage on additional individuals, do NOT return the original policy. Please provide only a photocopy of the Policy Data Page and applicable insurance rider.*
  - **COPY OF THE OBITUARY** (if available)
  - **BENEFICIARY NAME CHANGE** *Note: If the beneficiary's name changed after the owner designated the beneficiary, please send documentation of the name change (Marriage Certificate, Divorce Decree, etc.)*

Documents should be sent to Americo Life, Attn: Claims, at one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:

P.O. Box 410288

Kansas City, MO 64141-0288

Overnight Mail:

300 W. 11th Street

Kansas City, MO 64105

*Other than the original policy and Certified Death Certificate, most documents can be emailed to [forms@americo.com](mailto:forms@americo.com) or faxed to (800)-395-9238.*

3. Once the documentation and forms are received at our offices, we will review and advise if anything additional is needed to make a decision on the claim.

## **What claims require additional investigation?**

Claims made on policies that have been in force less than 2 years, deaths that occur outside the United States, homicide deaths and accidental deaths commonly require additional investigation and may take longer to resolve.

## **How soon will I receive my proceeds?**

Most claims are paid within 3 weeks of our receipt of all documents necessary to pay the claim. Some claims take longer and some may be able to be expedited. Three weeks is the average.

## **What is a certified death certificate and where can I get one?**

A certified death certificate is issued by a government agency and is usually certified by a raised or colored seal. They are available by ordering from the funeral home providing the funeral service, or through the State vital records department.

## **Will I receive interest on the policy proceeds?**

Some States provide for proceed interest on life insurance proceeds and we follow those guidelines. The policy may provide for interest. We ensure that the beneficiary receives the most interest possible.

## **Do I have to pay taxes on this death benefit?**

We do not give tax advice. Please consult with your tax adviser to determine taxability of benefits.

## **What is a Financial Access Account?**

The Financial Access Account (FAA) is a temporary repository of funds available to any beneficiary entitled to receive benefits of \$5,000 or more. The account's function is to give the beneficiary the time you need to consider all of the financial options available. The payment of the full benefit due under the policy will be accomplished by delivery of a "checkbook" of drafts which can be used similarly to checks on a bank account with certain limitations.

## **What is a contestable Life Insurance claim?**

A claim is contestable when the death occurs within the first two years of a policy. The insurance company has the contractual right to investigate the validity of the answers on the original application to ensure we would have issued the policy as it was applied for.

## **What are Letters Testamentary/Administration?**

Letters Testamentary/Administration is a document issued by a court or public official authorizing the executor of a will or estate to take control of a deceased person's estate. This document is normally needed when we are paying an estate.

## **What do I do if the estate is not being probated and is the beneficiary?**

Many states have small estate guidelines. If the estate is not being probated, the beneficiary should contact the probate court in the county where the deceased insured resided and inquire as to the options. The beneficiary can also find small estate information online, or can contact us and we will research small estate guidelines for the State in which the insured resided.

## **After I complete the life claim form, can I fax it to you?**

Yes, you may fax the completed and signed claim form to 800-395-923. Please note that an original certified death certificate may be required, which may not be accepted by fax.

## **May I copy this life claim form for other claimants' use?**

Yes. You may copy the blank form to provide to other beneficiaries or simply direct them to [www.Americo.com](http://www.Americo.com), where the forms can be downloaded.

## **If I make a mistake, how do I change information on the Claimant's Statement?**

Put a line through an incorrect answer and insert the correct information. DO NOT use correction fluid. The claimant must initial all corrections.

## **What makes it a certified death certificate?**

Certified death certificates have either a raised seal or a multicolored signature seal from the county, city, or state that issued the certificate. In addition, the original death certificate should contain the signature of an appropriate officer of the county, city, or state.

## **Will you accept a certified death certificate with a pending death cause?**

No. We must have a certified death certificate with a final cause and manner of death.

## **Are there any special requirements if the Insured died in a foreign country, i.e., outside the United States or its territories?**

We require an original certified death certificate, and, if appropriate, a Death of an American Citizen Abroad document. A Death of an American Citizen Abroad document is not an acceptable substitute for an original certified death certificate. In addition, we may require a foreign death questionnaire, cancelled passport, a copy of airline tickets, funeral/cremation bills, remains transport information/bills, or any other information we deem necessary based on the specific circumstances of your claim. To avoid delays, you should contact us immediately for detailed instructions. We will require bank information to wire proceeds to beneficiaries outside the U.S.

## **If the primary beneficiary is deceased, is a copy of the certified death certificate acceptable for the deceased primary beneficiary?**

Yes. Generally, we will accept a copy of the certified death certificate for any deceased beneficiary as well as a copy of an obituary.

## **Will you accept a copy of the original policy?**

No. We require the complete original policy, if available. You may make a copy of the original policy for your records. Please note that if the original policy is not available, the claim will not be delayed because of it.

## **What if the original policy is lost or otherwise unavailable?**

Simply complete and sign the Claimant's Statement. By signing the Claimant's Statement, you are declaring that all original policies and any duplicates and certificates are lost or otherwise unavailable, unless sent in with the Claimant's Statement. Also, check the box on our claimant statement that says "The original policy(ies) or copies cannot be located".

## **What claimant information for a trust do I include on the Claimant's Statement?**

You need to indicate the name of the trust under "Claimant's Name". The trust name should include the date of the trust. For "Claimant's Address", indicate a trustee's address where the death proceeds should be delivered. The claimant statement should be signed by all trustees and a copy of the trust documents provided to us.

## **If there are multiple trustees, how many need to sign the Claimant's Statement?**

Each current trustee must sign the Claimant's Statement in his/her capacity as Co-Trustee, unless the Trust document confers on one trustee the authority to act alone.

## **Why do we require a trust to provide a Tax Identification Number (TIN)?**

A person who is not an individual is required by federal income tax regulations to furnish a TIN to a payor of income. Thus, a trust must submit its TIN. Some trusts are grantor trusts under federal income tax law. The trustee of the grantor trust may provide the social security number of a living grantor (a person treated as the owner of the trust under federal income tax law) instead of the trust's TIN. In the typical case in which there is a single grantor of the grantor trust, and that grantor is the insured who has died, the trustee must furnish the trust's TIN, not the social security number of the grantor/trustee.

## **If the beneficiary's name has changed since the last beneficiary designation, what do I provide to validate the name change?**

If a beneficiary's name has changed because of marriage or divorce, we require a copy of the marriage certificate or divorce decree. If the beneficiary's name has changed because of personal preference, we will require a court document indicating the name change from the birth name to the requested name.

## **If I am signing as the Power of Attorney for the claimant, what do I need to send in as proof?**

Submit a copy of the executed Power of Attorney (POA) papers which give you the power to collect proceeds. You must sign the life claim form and indicate your capacity as "Attorney-in-fact" for the Beneficiary. Example of a proper signature: "Jane Doe by John W. Doe, Attorney-in-fact under POA dated MM/DD/YYYY".

## **Can the death claim proceeds from the policy be assigned to a funeral home?**

Yes. All designated beneficiaries must complete an appropriate assignment form provided by the funeral home, and that form must be submitted to us prior to the payment of the claim along with a Claimant's Statement for each beneficiary. If beneficiaries' proportions are not equal, the assignment must advise if assigned is also proportionate or equal. *Note that some jurisdictions require a funeral bill to be submitted with the assignment.*

## **Why does a beneficiary have to complete a Claimant's Statement when there is a collateral assignee?**

To avoid potential disagreements over the amount payable to the beneficiary and the collateral assignee.

## **Why do you require a statement from the beneficiary and collateral assignee agreeing to the amount claimed by the collateral assignee?**

To avoid potential disagreements over the amounts payable. The agreeing statements, indicating the amount that was due at the time of death of the insured, will expedite processing of your claim.

## **If the collateral assignment has already been released, what needs to be provided?**

A release of assignment from the collateral assignee. If the assignee is a bank, we will require an officer to sign the collateral assignment release. If the assignee has been acquired by another organization, we will require proof of that succession.