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**NOTIFYING DSL**

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If you or your organization are 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 Administrator  
Oregon Department of State Lands**

775 Summer St., NE  
Suite 100  
Salem, OR 97301-1279  
(503) 986-5287  
estates@dsl.state.or.us

[www.oregonstatelands.us](http://www.oregonstatelands.us)

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Contact the Estates Program to schedule presentations to businesses and professional associations.

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# Oregon's Estates Program

*Administering estates  
of persons who have died  
without a will  
and known heirs*



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## OREGON'S ESTATES PROGRAM – NOTIFICATION AND ADMINISTRATION

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Oregon law requires the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) to be notified within 48 hours upon the death of a person who appears to have no 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, the Estates Program staff takes immediate steps to gather information about the deceased and search for a valid will and heirs. This often includes searching and inventorying the deceased's residence and possessions. DSL also makes arrangements for the decedent's remains and acts on behalf of the deceased to close out personal affairs.

DSL diligently seeks to locate rightful heirs. If the search for heirs is unsuccessful, the agency 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. Other responsibilities include maintaining an inventory of real and personal property, and selling or managing assets in a manner that benefits the estate.

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## MISSING HEIRS

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Oregon Law requires that DSL is notified during probate of cases where some heirs or beneficiaries of a

will cannot be found during the administration of the estate. In these cases, the probate court will require the missing heir's share be remitted to DSL.

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## COMMON SCHOOL FUND

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All assets from estates are held in the Common School Fund (CSF) for up to 10 years, and may be recovered by proven heirs during this time period. If no heirs come forward within the appropriate time frame, the assets become a permanent part of the CSF and may not be recovered.

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 197 school districts. Since statehood, at which time the fund was established, hundreds of millions of dollars have benefited Oregon schoolchildren. The CSF's value is over \$1 billion, and distributions to schools since 2005 have averaged \$48 million annually.

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***“After an elderly tenant died, I was alerted to the Estates Program at DSL, whose staff helped settle the estate and start the process of cleaning out the apartment. The deceased had quite a collection of musical instruments, and I was so grateful for their quick work and careful attention to these items. The staff were a huge help to me, and I appreciate their good work on behalf of people who die without heirs or a will.”***

Salem Landlord



DSL will secure property,  
search for heirs, and close  
out personal affairs on  
behalf of the deceased.

