

Frequently Asked Questions:

- Do I need an attorney to open an estate?
 - Pennsylvania law does not state that a person must have an attorney to open an estate, but it is highly recommended. Please understand that our staff cannot provide you with legal advice. If you choose to do the estate without the assistance of an attorney, you will be acting as your own counsel.
- Can I probate a copy of a will?
 - You must have the decedent's original will to open an estate. If the original cannot be located, arrangements must be made to schedule a hearing before the Register of Wills to probate a copy of a will.
- How long does a person have to file a will or open an estate?
 - Estates are typically opened within a year of the date of death. Depending on individual circumstances, the amount of time it takes to open an Estate will vary. A Personal Representative has up to 21 years from the date of death of the decedent to open an estate without obtaining a court order.
- When are wills filed in the Register of Wills office?
 - One of the biggest misconceptions associated with the Register of Wills office is that wills are filed here before a person's death. Wills are only filed with this office AFTER a person's death. If you are attempting to locate the original will of a decedent, the following suggestions may be helpful: try the decedent's attorney, safety deposit box or residence.
- Who can help me calculate the amount of Inheritance Tax due?
 - The Register of Wills cannot calculate payments or correct Inheritance Tax billing errors. Please contact the Department of Revenue for assistance at 717-787-8327 (Harrisburg) or 570-963-4585 (Local).
- Where do I send inheritance tax payments and who do I make the check payable to?
 - Deliver or mail all inheritance tax payments to the Register of Wills. Located at The Lackawanna County Government Center, 123 Wyoming Ave, Suite 521, Scranton, P A 18503. Please make checks payable to the Register of Wills, Agent.
- What is the due date for inheritance tax payments?
 - Generally, Inheritance Tax payments are due within nine months from the date of death; however, if you pay within three months from the date of death, you will qualify for a five percent discount.
- Where do I file Inheritance Tax return
 - Deliver or mail the Inheritance Tax Return and on duplicate to the Register of Wills office located at The Lackawanna County Government Center, 123 Wyoming Ave, Suite 521, Scranton, PA 18503.