

NJ PROPERTY TOOLKIT

# New Jersey Probate Starter Workbook

NJ Property Toolkit • Workbook No. 1

A print-ready planning workbook for heirs, executors, families, and property professionals organizing the first probate and property decisions after a death in New Jersey.

Viera Investment Group LLC

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## New Jersey Probate Starter Workbook

A print-ready planning workbook for heirs, executors, families, and property professionals organizing the first probate and property decisions after a death in New Jersey.

| Prepared by                | Prepared for                               | Version | Updated      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| Viera Investment Group LLC | New Jersey probate and property situations | v1.0    | July 9, 2026 |

This workbook is an educational planning tool designed to help organize documents, deadlines, questions, and information. It is not legal, tax, accounting, financial, or investment advice and should not replace guidance from licensed professionals.

Our role is to help people understand complicated residential property situations, simplify the process, coordinate experienced professionals when appropriate, and help families move forward with greater clarity and confidence—not replace the advice of licensed professionals.

Complex residential property situations often require several professionals working together. Depending on the circumstances, Viera Investment Group LLC may help coordinate the property-related process with experienced attorneys, title companies, loan servicers, lenders, estate professionals, municipal offices, contractors, Realtors®, accountants, financial professionals, and other licensed specialists.

## Welcome

This workbook helps organize the facts that often get scattered after a death: who has authority, what documents are missing, what is happening with the property, and which questions need answers before a decision is made.

Use it as a practical organizer. It does not replace the county Surrogate, an attorney, a tax professional, a title company, a lender, or any public office.

## Who this workbook is for

- ☐ New Jersey heirs trying to understand what happens next.
- ☐ Executors or administrators preparing for Surrogate or attorney conversations.
- ☐ Families managing a house, mortgage, insurance, utilities, taxes, or liens during probate.
- ☐ Attorneys, financial professionals, and real estate professionals who want a clean client intake companion.

## Use this first

- ☐ Print the workbook or type into the DOCX version.
- ☐ Complete the urgent pages before the planning pages.
- ☐ Keep copies of proof, account statements, bills, and letters together.
- ☐ Verify county-specific probate steps before relying on any timeline.

## How to Use This Workbook

Move from facts to deadlines to decisions. Do not try to answer every question in one sitting. Start with the immediate first steps, then complete the worksheets that match the property situation.

### Recommended order

- ☐ Complete the immediate first steps checklist.
- ☐ Build the probate timeline and executor checklist.
- ☐ Gather estate, property, mortgage, tax, utility, and insurance documents.
- ☐ Prepare questions for the Surrogate and attorney.
- ☐ Use the family meeting worksheet and action plan before making commitments.

### What to leave blank

- ☐ Leave any legal conclusion blank until confirmed by counsel.
- ☐ Leave any payoff, lien, or tax balance blank until verified by the correct office.
- ☐ Leave sale, refinance, or distribution decisions blank until authority and title are clear.

# Immediate First Steps After Someone Dies

The first few days are about safety, communication, documentation, and avoiding irreversible mistakes. This page is intentionally practical and conservative.

## Checklist

- ☐ Secure the home, keys, vehicles, mail, and valuables.
- ☐ Arrange for care of pets, plants, heat, water, and basic property maintenance.
- ☐ Request multiple certified death certificates through the funeral home or appropriate office.
- ☐ Locate the original will, trust documents, funeral instructions, and safe deposit box information.
- ☐ Identify urgent bills: mortgage, property taxes, insurance, utilities, HOA or condo dues.
- ☐ Notify close family members and create one shared contact list.
- ☐ Do not distribute personal property, sell assets, or sign listing paperwork until authority is confirmed.
- ☐ Make a photo record of the property's condition and any urgent repair issues.

|                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Date completed             | Person coordinating |
| Most urgent property issue | Next call to make   |

|                 |
|-----------------|
| Immediate notes |
|-----------------|

## Probate Timeline

New Jersey probate timing depends on the county, the documents available, whether there is a will, whether heirs agree, and whether creditor, tax, title, or property issues exist. Use this as an organizer, not a promise of timing.

| Stage                                  | What to organize                                                                                                     | Date / deadline | Owner |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Death and document search              | Death certificate, original will, asset records, property records, account statements.                               |                 |       |
| Surrogate or attorney intake           | Confirm who may apply, what documents are needed, and whether the will can be admitted.                              |                 |       |
| Letters issued or next court step      | Letters Testamentary or Administration may be needed before title companies, banks, and buyers rely on authority.    |                 |       |
| Notice, inventory, bills, and claims   | Track heirs, beneficiaries, known creditors, taxes, utilities, mortgage, insurance, and estate costs.                |                 |       |
| Property decision window               | Keep, sell, refinance, occupy, repair, list, buy out heirs, or pursue another strategy after authority is confirmed. |                 |       |
| Closing, accounting, and distributions | Coordinate title, payoffs, liens, estate expenses, taxes, releases, and final records before distributions.          |                 |       |

## Executor Checklist

Executors and administrators often become the practical traffic controller for documents, family communication, property costs, and professional coordination.

### Checklist

- ☐ Confirm appointment status and obtain certified copies of Letters if issued.
- ☐ Open a dedicated estate file and keep communications in one place.
- ☐ Create a known-heir and beneficiary contact list.
- ☐ Track all estate income, bills, reimbursements, and property expenses.
- ☐ Confirm whether the home is occupied, vacant, insured, winterized, or at risk.
- ☐ Request current mortgage, tax, lien, utility, and insurance information.
- ☐ Ask an attorney or tax professional about notices, deadlines, claims, taxes, and accounting duties.
- ☐ Avoid commingling estate funds with personal accounts.

|                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Executor / administrator | Letters date           |
| Attorney contact         | Main property deadline |

|                |
|----------------|
| Executor notes |
|----------------|

## Documents to Gather

Use this page as the core estate document folder. Copies are useful, but some offices may require originals or certified copies.

### Document Checklist

- ☐ Certified death certificates
- ☐ Original will and codicils, if any
- ☐ Trust documents, if any
- ☐ Letters Testamentary or Letters of Administration
- ☐ Deed, title policy, survey, and closing statement
- ☐ Mortgage, HELOC, reverse mortgage, or payoff statements
- ☐ Property tax, water, sewer, utility, and municipal bills
- ☐ Homeowners, landlord, vacant property, flood, or umbrella insurance policies
- ☐ Bank, retirement, investment, pension, and benefit statements
- ☐ Vehicle titles, business records, and safe deposit box information
- ☐ Prior appraisals, repair records, leases, or occupancy agreements
- ☐ Funeral invoice and estate expense receipts

| Document                                                                     | Where it is | Who has it | Next step |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| Certified death certificates                                                 |             |            |           |
| Original will and codicils, if any                                           |             |            |           |
| Trust documents, if any                                                      |             |            |           |
| Letters Testamentary or Letters of Administration                            |             |            |           |
| Deed, title policy, survey, and closing statement                            |             |            |           |
| Mortgage, HELOC, reverse mortgage, or payoff statements                      |             |            |           |
| Property tax, water, sewer, utility, and municipal bills                     |             |            |           |
| Homeowners, landlord, vacant property, flood, or umbrella insurance policies |             |            |           |
| Bank, retirement, investment, pension, and benefit statements                |             |            |           |
| Vehicle titles, business records, and safe                                   |             |            |           |

|                                                                   |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| deposit box information                                           |  |  |  |
| Prior appraisals, repair records, leases, or occupancy agreements |  |  |  |
| Funeral invoice and estate expense receipts                       |  |  |  |

## Important Contacts

### FREE TO FIND OUT

**You do not need every document or every answer before contacting us.**

We buy New Jersey houses as-is - no repairs, cleanup, showings, or commissions. Tell Ray what is happening and what deadline you are facing. It is free to find out whether a direct sale could help.

**THE PROPERTY PROBLEM CAN START BEING ADDRESSED TODAY. Call (973) 939-5151 or text (424) 440-2739.**

Keep this page current. If several relatives are calling the same offices, designate one point person to reduce confusion.

| Name or office       | Role              | Phone / email | Notes |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|
| County Surrogate     | Probate filing    |               |       |
| Estate attorney      | Legal guidance    |               |       |
| Tax professional     | Tax questions     |               |       |
| Title company        | Title review      |               |       |
| Mortgage servicer    | Loan / payoff     |               |       |
| Insurance agent      | Coverage          |               |       |
| Municipal tax office | Taxes / liens     |               |       |
| Utility provider     | Service / balance |               |       |
| Family point person  | Communication     |               |       |

## Property Information Worksheet

This page captures the real estate facts that most conversations eventually require.

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Property address         | Block / lot                 |
| County                   | Municipality                |
| Current occupant         | Vacant or occupied          |
| Keys / access held by    | Alarm / lockbox information |
| Estimated condition      | Known repairs               |
| Personal property inside | Utilities currently on      |
| Insurance status         | Tax status                  |
| Mortgage status          | Urgent deadline             |

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| Property notes and condition summary |
|--------------------------------------|

## Mortgage and Lien Tracker

Do not rely on memory for balances. Request written statements from the correct servicer, lienholder, municipality, or title professional.

| Item                        | Company / office | Account or reference | Balance / deadline | Next step |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| First mortgage              |                  |                      |                    |           |
| Second mortgage / HELOC     |                  |                      |                    |           |
| Reverse mortgage            |                  |                      |                    |           |
| Property taxes              |                  |                      |                    |           |
| Water / sewer               |                  |                      |                    |           |
| Municipal lien / code issue |                  |                      |                    |           |
| Judgment / creditor claim   |                  |                      |                    |           |
| HOA / condo dues            |                  |                      |                    |           |

# Utility and Insurance Tracker

A property can become harder to protect if coverage lapses, heat is shut off, water leaks, or bills are ignored. Use this tracker to assign ownership.

| Service                  | Provider | Current status | Amount due | Owner / next step |
|--------------------------|----------|----------------|------------|-------------------|
| Electric                 |          |                |            |                   |
| Gas / heating fuel       |          |                |            |                   |
| Water                    |          |                |            |                   |
| Sewer                    |          |                |            |                   |
| Trash / municipal        |          |                |            |                   |
| Homeowners insurance     |          |                |            |                   |
| Flood insurance          |          |                |            |                   |
| Vacant property coverage |          |                |            |                   |

## Questions to Ask the Surrogate

Bring this page to the county Surrogate conversation or use it before calling the office. County procedures can vary, so write down the answer, the date, and the person who gave it.

### Questions

- ☐ What documents are required to begin probate in this county?
- ☐ Does the original will need to be presented, and how should it be delivered?
- ☐ Who is eligible to apply for Letters Testamentary or Letters of Administration?
- ☐ How many certified Letters should be ordered for banks, title, property, and other offices?
- ☐ Are there county-specific forms, filing fees, appointment rules, or waiting periods?
- ☐ What happens if an heir objects, cannot be located, or refuses to cooperate?
- ☐ What should we do if there is no will?
- ☐ What should we ask an attorney before proceeding?

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| Answers and follow-up notes |
|-----------------------------|

## Questions to Ask an Attorney

Use this page for legal questions that should not be guessed at. Bring documents, correspondence, deadlines, and family concerns to the conversation.

### Questions

- ☐ Who has legal authority to act for the estate right now?
- ☐ Does the will give power to sell real estate, or is a court order needed?
- ☐ What notices, creditor issues, tax filings, or accounting duties apply?
- ☐ Can estate funds be used for mortgage, taxes, insurance, utilities, or repairs?
- ☐ What are the risks if one heir lives in the property, blocks access, or refuses to sign?
- ☐ What should happen before listing, selling, refinancing, transferring, or renting the property?
- ☐ Are there inheritance tax, estate tax, income tax, or basis issues to discuss with a tax professional?
- ☐ What should the executor avoid doing without written advice?

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| Answers and follow-up notes |
|-----------------------------|

## Family Meeting Worksheet

Family meetings work better when the agenda is narrow and facts are separated from opinions. Use this worksheet before discussing property decisions.

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Meeting date    | People attending     |
| Decision needed | Person leading notes |

Known facts everyone agrees on

Open questions that need professional answers

Expenses that must be paid soon

Property options to compare

Concerns from each heir or beneficiary

Agreements made during the meeting

## Action Plan

Convert uncertainty into assigned tasks. Keep the first action plan short enough to finish.

[illegible]

## Common Mistakes

These mistakes can create title, family, creditor, tax, insurance, or property problems. Use this page as a final review before signing anything or making a major decision.

### Checklist

- ☐ Assuming someone has authority before Letters or legal authority are confirmed.
- ☐ Letting insurance lapse or failing to tell the carrier the property is vacant.
- ☐ Ignoring mortgage, tax, utility, HOA, code, or lien notices because probate is pending.
- ☐ Distributing money or belongings before debts, taxes, and claims are understood.
- ☐ Relying on a verbal payoff, tax balance, or family agreement without written proof.
- ☐ Allowing one heir to control access, mail, documents, or communication without transparency.
- ☐ Listing or selling the property before title, authority, occupancy, and payoff issues are reviewed.
- ☐ Waiting until a foreclosure, tax sale, code enforcement, or insurance deadline is already urgent.

## Official New Jersey Resources

Use official sources for procedures, directories, taxes, and public-office information. Print or save confirmation pages when they affect a deadline.

| Official resource                                                      | Printed URL                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New Jersey Courts - Probate Self-Help                                  | <a href="https://www.njcourts.gov/self-help/probate">https://www.njcourts.gov/self-help/probate</a>                                                                     |
| New Jersey Courts - County Surrogates Directory                        | <a href="https://www.njcourts.gov/public/directories/court-services/county-surrogates">https://www.njcourts.gov/public/directories/court-services/county-surrogates</a> |
| New Jersey Treasury - Inheritance and Estate Tax                       | <a href="https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/inheritance-estate/">https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/inheritance-estate/</a>                                         |
| New Jersey Unclaimed Property Administration                           | <a href="https://unclaimedproperty.nj.gov/">https://unclaimedproperty.nj.gov/</a>                                                                                       |
| New Jersey Division of Taxation - Local Property Tax                   | <a href="https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/lpt/">https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/lpt/</a>                                                                       |
| New Jersey Department of Community Affairs - Local Government Services | <a href="https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlgs/">https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlgs/</a>                                                                                                 |

Resource notes

## Talk With Ray

Use this page if the property has carrying costs, title questions, multiple heirs, vacancy, mortgage pressure, tax issues, utility liens, repair problems, or uncertainty about whether selling is practical.

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Property address     | Who has authority    |
| Most urgent deadline | Best callback number |

|                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|
| What I want to understand before the call |
|-------------------------------------------|

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| Facts I should have ready |
|---------------------------|

|                             |
|-----------------------------|
| Questions I want to ask Ray |
|-----------------------------|

Office: 973-939-5151 | Text/SMS: 424-440-2739 | Website: [vierainvestmentgroup.com](http://vierainvestmentgroup.com)

## Notes Page 1

Notes

**Notes Page 2**

|       |
|-------|
| Notes |
|-------|

**Notes Page 3**

Notes

# Educational Disclaimer

This workbook is for general educational and organizational use only. It is not legal, tax, financial, probate, title, foreclosure, lending, insurance, municipal, or government advice.

Viera Investment Group LLC is a real estate investment company, not a law firm, tax advisor, financial advisor, lender, title company, court, county Surrogate, municipal office, or government agency. Confirm deadlines, balances, authority, procedures, and available options with the appropriate qualified professional or public office before acting.

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Workbook version | Date reviewed       |
| Reviewed by      | Questions to verify |

## **Back Cover**

Viera Investment Group LLC

If you are unsure where to begin, that is okay. Let's talk about your situation, help you understand the property-related process, and identify practical next steps when appropriate.

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