

**701—900.6(450) The net estate.****900.6(1) Liabilities deductible.**

a. *Debts owing by decedent.* A debt, to be allowed as a deduction in determining the net estate under Iowa Code section 450.12, must be the liability of the decedent and also be owing and not discharged at the time of the decedent's death. The amount allowable as a deduction is the principal amount due, plus interest accruing to the day of the decedent's death. If the decedent is not the only person liable for the debt, only a portion of the debt shall be deducted for inheritance tax purposes. The portion deducted is based on the number of solvent obligors. If a joint and several debt has more than one obligor and one obligor pays the remaining balance owed on the debt, the obligor who pays the remaining debt has a right of contribution for payment of the debt against the other solvent obligors. If the decedent is the obligor and the estate pays the remaining balance of the debt, the estate must list the right of contribution as an asset on the Iowa inheritance tax return. *In re Estate of Tollefsrud*, 275 N.W.2d 412 (Iowa 1979); *In re Estate of Thomas*, 454 N.W.2d 66 (Iowa App. 1990); *Estate of Pauline Bladt*, Department of Revenue and Finance, Hearing Office Decision, Docket No. 95-70-1-0174 (December 16, 1996). The term "debt owing by the decedent" is not defined in Iowa Code section 450.12. However, Iowa Code section 633.3(10) defines "debts" as including liabilities of the decedent which survive, whether arising in contract, tort, or otherwise.

The term "debt of the decedent" does not include taxes, which are an impost levied by authority of government upon its citizens or subjects for the support of the state. *Eide v. Hottman*, 257 Iowa 263, 265, 132 N.W.2d 755 (1965). Please note, that this is a nonexclusive example of "debt of the decedent." Promissory notes executed by the decedent without consideration are not debts of the decedent and are not allowable as a deduction in determining the net estate subject to tax. *In re McAllister's Estate*, 214 N.W.2d 142 (Iowa 1974). Payments to persons in compromise of their claim to a portion of the estate made by those persons who take from the decedent are not debts nor treated as expenses of settlement. *In re Estate of Bliven*, 236 N.W.2d 366, 371 (Iowa 1975); *In re Estate of Wells*, 142 Iowa 255, 259, 260, 120 N.W. 713 (1909).

Iowa Code section 450.12 and Internal Revenue Code Section 2053 provide that debts owing by the decedent to be allowable in computing the net estate must be the type of obligation of the decedent for which a claim could be filed and be enforced in the probate proceedings of the estate. *In re Estate of McMahon*, 237 Iowa 236, 21 N.W.2d 581 (1946); *In re Estate of Laartz*, Cass County District Court, Probate No. 9641 (1973); *In re Estate of Tracy*, Department of Revenue and Finance, Hearing Officer Decision Docket No. 77-167-3-A (1977). Filing a claim in probate proceedings is not a prerequisite for the allowance of the liability as a deduction in computing the net estate. An allowable liability is deductible whether or not the liability is legally enforceable against the decedent's estate. Claims in probate founded on a promise or agreement are deductible only to the extent they were contracted bona fide and for an adequate and full consideration. *In re McAllister's Estate*, 214 N.W.2d 142 (Iowa 1974).

The debt must have been paid prior to the filing of the inheritance tax return, or if the debt is not paid at the time the final inheritance tax return is filed (which is frequently the case in installment obligations) the burden is on the taxpayer to establish, if requested by the department, that the debt will be paid at a future date. The validity of a claim in probate based on a liability of the decedent is subject to review by the department. *In re Estate of Stephenson*, 234 Iowa 1315, 1319, 14 N.W.2d 684 (1944).

If any doubt or ambiguity exists whether an item is deductible or not, it is to be strictly construed against the taxpayer. Therefore, the burden is on the taxpayer to establish that an item is deductible. *In re Estate of Waddington*, 201 N.W.2d 77 (Iowa 1972).

The department may require the taxpayer to furnish reasonable proof to establish the deductible items such as, but not limited to, canceled checks in payment of an obligation, copies of court orders allowing claims against the estate, attorney and fiduciary fees, allowances for the surviving spouse, and copies of notes and mortgages.

b. *Mortgages—decedent's debt.* A mortgage or other encumbrance securing a debt of the decedent on Iowa property in which the decedent had an interest is allowable as a deduction in determining the net estate in the same manner as an unsecured debt of the decedent, even though it may be deducted from different shares of the estate than unsecured debts. (See Iowa Code section 633.278.) However, if the debt of the decedent is secured by property located outside Iowa, which is not subject to Iowa inheritance tax,

the debt is allowable as a deduction in determining the net estate, only in the amount the debt exceeds the value of the property securing the debt.

*c. Mortgages—not decedent's debt.* If the gross estate includes property subject to a mortgage or other encumbrance which secures a debt which is not enforceable against the decedent, the amount of the debt, including interest accrued to the day of death, is deductible, not as a debt of the decedent, but from the fair market value of the encumbered property. The deduction is limited to the amount the decedent would have had to pay to remove the encumbrance less the value, if any, of the decedent's right of recovery against the debtor. See *Home Owners Loan Corp. v. Rupe*, 225 Iowa 1044, 1047, 283 N.W. 108 (1938), for circumstances under which the right of subrogation may exist.

*d. Mortgages—nonprobate property.* A debt secured by property not subject to the jurisdiction of the probate court, such as, but not limited to, jointly owned property and property transferred within three years of death is deducted in the same manner as a debt secured by probate property. The fact the property is includable in the gross estate is the controlling factor in determining the deductibility of the debt (providing the debt is otherwise deductible).

*e. Inheritance and accrued taxes.*

(1) Inheritance tax. The inheritance tax imposed in the decedent's estate is not a tax on the decedent's property nor is it a state tax due from the estate. It is a succession tax on a person's right to take from the decedent. The tax is the obligation of the person who succeeds to property included in the gross estate. *Wieting v. Morrow*, 151 Iowa 590, 132 N.W. 193 (1911); *Waterman v. Burbank*, 196 Iowa 793, 195 N.W. 191 (1923). Therefore, inheritance tax is not a deduction in determining the net estate of the decedent in which the tax was imposed. However, if a taxpayer dies owing an inheritance tax imposed in another estate, the tax imposed in the prior estate, together with penalty and interest owing, if any, is a deduction as a state tax due in the deceased taxpayer's estate.

(2) Accrued taxes. In Iowa, property taxes accrue on the date that they are levied even though they are not due and payable until the following July 1. *In re Estate of Luke*, 184 N.W.2d 42 (Iowa 1971); *Merv E. Hilpipre Auction Co. v. Solon State Board*, 343 N.W.2d 452 (Iowa 1984).

Death terminates the decedent's taxable year for income tax purposes. Federal regulation Section 1.443-1(a)(2), 701—paragraph 700.4(9)“b.” As a result, the Iowa tax on the decedent's income for the taxable year ending with the decedent's death is accrued on date of death.

In addition, any federal income tax for the decedent's final taxable year is owing at death, even though it is not payable until a later date. Therefore, both the decedent's state and federal income taxes, both for prior years and the year of death, are deductible in computing the taxable estate if unpaid at death.

*f. Federal taxes.* Deductible under this category are the federal estate taxes and federal taxes owing by the decedent including any penalty and interest accrued to the date of death. Prior to 1983, the federal estate tax was prorated based on the portion of federal estate tax attributable to Iowa property and that attributable to property located outside the state of Iowa. However, currently the deductibility of federal estate tax is treated like other liabilities of the estate. For estates with property located in Iowa and outside the state of Iowa, see the proration computation provided in 900.6(2). The deduction is limited to the net federal tax owing after all allowable credits have been subtracted. Any penalty and interest imposed or accruing on federal taxes after the decedent's death is not deductible.

*g. Funeral expenses.* The deduction is limited to the expense of the decedent's funeral, which includes, but is not limited to, flowers, cost of meals, cards and postage. Expenses that are not deductible include, but are not limited to, family travel expenses. If the decedent at the time of death was liable for the funeral expense of another, such expense is categorized as a debt of the decedent and is deductible subject to the same conditions as other debts of the decedent. *In re Estate of Porter*, 212 Iowa 29, 236 N.W. 108 (1931). A devise in the decedent's will, or a direction in a trust instrument, to pay the funeral expense of a beneficiary upon death is an additional inheritance in favor of the beneficiary and not a funeral expense deductible in the estate of the testator or grantor. Funeral expense is the liability of the estate of the person who has died. *In re Estate of Kneebbs*, 246 Iowa 1053, 70 N.W.2d 539 (1955).

What constitutes a reasonable expense for the decedent's funeral depends upon the facts and circumstances in each particular estate. Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to: the decedent's station in life and the size of the estate, *Foley v. Brocksmitt*, 119 Iowa 457, 93 N.W. 344 (1903);

and the decedent's known wishes (tomb rather than a grave), *Morrow v. Durant*, 140 Iowa 437, 118 N.W. 781 (1908). Funeral expense includes the cost of a tombstone or monument. *In re Estate of Harris*, 237 Iowa 613, 23 N.W.2d 445 (1946). A reasonable fee or honorarium paid to the officiating clergy is a deductible funeral expense. *In re Estate of Kneebbs*, 246 Iowa 1053, 1058, 70 N.W.2d 539 (1955). It is not a prerequisite for deductibility that a claim for funeral expenses be filed and allowed in the probate proceedings. It is sufficient that the expense be paid whether or not the claim is legally enforceable against the decedent's estate. The deduction allowable is limited to the net expense of the decedent's funeral, after deducting any expense prepaid by the decedent, burial insurance or death benefit, such as the death benefit allowed by the veterans administration or the social security administration.

*h. Allowance for surviving spouse and dependents.* An allowance for the support of the surviving spouse and dependents to be deductible in determining the net estate for taxation must meet two conditions: First it must be allowed and ordered by the court and second it must be paid from the assets of the estate that are subject to the jurisdiction of the probate court. The allowance is not an additional exemption for the spouse or children. It is part of the costs of administration of the decedent's estate. Iowa Code section 633.374; *In re Estate of DeVries*, 203 N.W.2d 308, 311 (Iowa 1972). Upon request of the department, the taxpayer shall submit a copy of the order of the court providing for the allowance and copies of canceled checks or other documents establishing payment of the allowance.

For the purpose of determining the shares of heirs or beneficiaries for inheritance tax, the allowance is a charge against the corpus of the shares of the estate even though it is paid from the income of the shares. The allowance is included with the other debts and charges for the purpose of abatement of shares to pay the debts and charges of the estate.

*i. Court costs.* The deduction under this category is limited to Iowa court costs only. *In re Estate of Evans*, 246 Iowa 893, 68 N.W.2d 289 (1955). The term "court costs" is not synonymous with "costs of administration" as defined in Iowa Code section 633.3(8) or "administration expenses" under Section 2053(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. See federal regulation Section 20.2053-3(d). "Court costs" is a narrower term. Court costs are part of costs of administration in Iowa and are an expense of administration under the Internal Revenue Code, but not all costs or expenses of administration are court costs. For example, interest payable on an extension of time to pay the federal estate tax is a cost of administration in the estate in which the federal estate tax is imposed, but it is not part of court costs, and therefore not deductible for inheritance tax purposes.

In general, court costs include only those statutory fees and expenses relating directly to the probate proceeding, carried on the clerk's docket, and paid routinely in the process of closing every estate. *In re Estate of Waddington*, 201 N.W.2d 77, 79 (Iowa 1972). The term "court costs" since August 15, 1975, also includes the expenses of selling property. See Iowa Code sections 450.12 and 633.3(8) and Internal Revenue Code Section 2053 for further details.

*j. Additional liabilities that are deductible.* Subject to subrules 900.6(4) and 900.6(5), the only liabilities deductible from the gross value of the estate include debts owing by the decedent at the time of death, local and state taxes accrued before the decedent's death, federal estate tax and federal taxes owing by the decedent, a sum for reasonable funeral expenses, the allowance for surviving spouse and minor children granted by the probate court or its judge, court costs, and any other administration expenses allowable pursuant to Section 2053 of the Internal Revenue Code.

(1) Criteria for deductible administration expenses under Section 2053 of the Internal Revenue Code. Administration expenses must meet certain requirements to be allowable deductions under Section 2053 of the Internal Revenue Code. To be allowable deductions, expenses must meet the following conditions:

1. The expenses must be payable out of property subject to claims;
2. The expenses are allowable (not based on the deductible amount) by the law governing the administration of the decedent's estate;
3. The expenses are actually and necessarily incurred in the administration of the estate. Administration expenses are limited to those expenses incurred in the settlement of the estate and the transfer of the estate property to beneficiaries and trustees, including an executor that is a trustee. Expenses that are not essential to the settlement of the estate, but are incurred for the individual benefit of the heirs, legatees, or devisees, may not be taken as deductions; and

4. The allowable amount of expenses for deduction is limited to the value of property included in the decedent's gross estate and subject to claims, plus amounts paid out of the property not subject to claims against the decedent's estate, on or before the last day of the ninth month after death or within any granted extension(s) of time for filing the return. "Property subject to claims" is defined as the property includable in the gross estate which bears the burden or would bear the burden under law for payment of the deduction in the final adjustment and settlement of the decedent's estate, less an initial deduction allowable under Section 2054 of the Internal Revenue Code, for any losses for casualty or theft attributable to such property and incurred during the settlement of the estate.

(2) Allowable administration expenses. Subject to the limitations in paragraph "a" of this subrule, allowable administration expenses under Section 2053 of the Internal Revenue Code include costs and fees incurred in the collection of assets, payment of debts, distribution of property to entitled persons, executor's commission, attorney's fees, and miscellaneous administration expenses. Miscellaneous administration expenses include costs or fees for surrogates, accountants, appraisers, clerk hire, storing or maintaining property of the estate, and selling the property of the estate. Expenses for preserving and caring for the property do not include expenditures for additions or improvements or expenses for a longer period than the executor is reasonably required to retain the property. Expenses for selling property of the estate are limited to those for sales that are necessary in order to pay the decedent's debts, expenses of administration, and taxes, preserve the estate, or effect distribution. Expenses for selling the property include brokerage fees or auctioneer fees and may include the expenses for a sale of an item in a bona fide sale that is below the fair market value of the item. The allowable selling expense for an item sold below its fair market value to a dealer in such items is the lesser of the amount by which the fair market value of the item on the valuation date exceeded the proceeds from the sale or the amount by which the fair market value of the item on the date of the sale exceeded the proceeds of the sale.

**900.6(2)** *Prorated liabilities.*

a. The amount of the liability that is deductible depends upon the situs of the property in the gross estate.

If part of the property included in the gross estate has a situs in a jurisdiction other than Iowa, only a pro rata amount of the liabilities specified in Iowa Code section 450.12, with the exception of liabilities secured by a lien on property, is deductible in computing the net estate for Iowa inheritance tax purposes. The amount deductible is computed by multiplying the total amount of the unsecured liabilities by a fraction of which the Iowa situs property in the gross estate is the numerator and the total gross estate is the denominator. For the purpose of apportionment of the liabilities, the term "gross estate" means the gross estate for federal estate tax purposes. Provided, if the federal gross estate formula produces a grossly distorted result then, subject to the approval of the department, an alternate apportionment formula may be used either by the department or the taxpayer which fairly represents the particular facts of the estate.

Liabilities secured by a lien on property are allocated to the state of situs. If the secured liability exceeds the value of the security, any excess is prorated in the same manner as an unsecured liability.

b. *Liabilities that must be prorated.* If the gross estate includes property with a situs outside Iowa, the liabilities that must be prorated are: (1) court costs, both foreign and domestic; (2) unsecured debts of the decedent regardless of where the debt was contracted; (3) federal and state income tax, including the tax on the decedent's final return, federal estate, gift and excise tax, and state and local sales, use and excise tax; (4) expenses of the decedent's funeral and burial, regardless of the place of interment; (5) allowances for the surviving spouse and children allowed by the probate court in Iowa or another jurisdiction; (6) the expense of the appraisal of property for the purpose of assessing a state death or succession tax; (7) the fees and necessary expenses of the personal representative and the personal representative's attorney allowed by order of court, both foreign and domestic; (8) the costs of the sale of real and personal property, both foreign and domestic, if not otherwise included in court costs; and (9) the amount paid by the personal representative for a bond, both foreign and domestic.

c. *Liabilities that are not prorated.* Liabilities secured by a lien on property included in the gross estate are to be allocated in full to the state of situs. These are liabilities secured by: (1) mortgages, mechanic's liens and judgments; (2) real estate taxes and special assessments on real property; (3) liens for

an obligation to the United States of America, a state or any of its political subdivisions; and (4) any other lien on property imposed by law for the security of an obligation.

**900.6(3)** *Liabilities deductible from property not subject to the payment of debts and charges.*

*a. Estates with all of the property located in Iowa.* Subject to the special provisions in 900.6(3)“c,” the liabilities deductible under Iowa Code section 450.12 may be deductible in whole or in part from property includable in the gross estate for inheritance tax purposes which under Iowa debtor-creditor law is not liable for the payment of the debts and charges of the estate under the following terms and conditions:

(1) The application of liabilities.

1. The liabilities must be paid. If a liability is not paid in full, the amount deductible is limited to the amount paid. If the amount claimed is not certified as paid by the time the inheritance tax return is filed, the statute requires that the director must be satisfied that the liabilities, or portions thereof deductible, will be paid.

2. The liability can be deducted only from property that is included in the gross estate for Iowa inheritance tax purposes. This rule would exclude, among others, that portion of joint tenancy property which is excluded from the gross estate, wrongful death proceeds, gifts to each donee made within three years of death up to an amount equal to the annual federal gift tax exclusion, and property with a situs outside Iowa.

3. The property included in the gross estate that is under Iowa debtor-creditor law subject to the payment of the deductible liabilities must first be applied to the liabilities, and only after this property has been exhausted can the excess liabilities be applied to the remaining property included in the gross estate.

4. Any excess liabilities remaining unpaid after exhausting the property subject to the payment of the liabilities must be allocated to the remaining property included in the gross estate for inheritance tax purposes on the basis of the ratio the value of each person’s share of the remaining property in the gross estate bears to the total value of the remaining property included in the gross estate.

(2) General rules.

1. The source of the funds used for payment of the excess liabilities is not relevant to the allowance of the deduction. It is sufficient for the allowance of the deduction that the liability be paid.

2. The applicability of the statute is limited to the deduction for inheritance tax purposes of those liabilities listed in Iowa Code subsection 450.12(1). It neither enlarges nor diminishes the rights of creditors under existing Iowa law.

3. The statute is not limited to estates which are probated and subject to the jurisdiction of the probate court. The statute also applies to estates which file an inheritance tax return for a tax clearance (CIT proceedings) or those otherwise not probated such as, but not limited to, inter vivos trusts whose assets are subject to inheritance tax, estates consisting of joint tenancy with right of survivorship property, estates whose assets consist of transferred property with a reserved life use or interest, estates whose assets consist of gifts made within three years of the decedent’s death and estates consisting entirely of qualified terminal interest property (QTIP) in the estate of the surviving spouse.

The statute will apply to any estate when any share of the estate will remain taxable after being reduced by the liabilities in Iowa Code subsection 450.12(1) which are lawfully charged to the share and the deduction of any statutory exemption. Excess liabilities must be prorated over all of the property not subject to debts and charges regardless of whether or not the property is part of a taxable share.

*b. Estates with part of the property located outside Iowa.* Iowa Code section 450.12(2) and subrule 900.6(2) require that the liabilities deductible be prorated in those estates where a portion of the property included in the gross estate has a situs outside Iowa. Subject to the special provision in 900.6(3)“c,” in these estates the portion of the liabilities deductible which is allocated to the Iowa property under the proration formula must first be applied to the Iowa situs property which is subject to the payment of the liabilities. Any portion of the liabilities allocated to Iowa remaining unpaid may then be applied to the other Iowa property included in the gross estate subject to the same limitations provided for in 900.6(3)“a”(1)“1” to “4.”

*c. Special rule for liabilities secured by property included in the gross estate.* If a liability which is deductible under Iowa Code section 450.12(1)“a” is secured by property included in the gross estate, then the liability is deductible from the specific property that secures the liability, regardless of whether or not

the property is subject to the payment of the ordinary debts and charges of the estate. If the liability exceeds the value of the property that secures it and is the obligation of the decedent, then any excess liability is deductible under the same rules that govern unsecured obligations.

**900.6(4)** *Resident and nonresident deductions distinction abolished.* Effective for estates of decedents dying on or after July 1, 1983, the domicile of the decedent is not relevant in determining whether a liability is deductible in computing the net estate. In the case of *In re Estate of Evans*, 246 Iowa 893, 68 N.W.2d 289 (1955) applies only to estates of decedents dying prior to July 1, 1983. However, the amount of the liability that is deductible depends upon the situs of the property in the gross estate.

If part of the property included in the gross estate has a situs in a jurisdiction other than Iowa, only a pro rata amount of the liabilities specified in Iowa Code section 450.12, with the exception of liabilities secured by a lien on property, is deductible in computing the net estate for Iowa inheritance tax purposes. The amount deductible is computed by multiplying the total amount of the unsecured liabilities by a fraction of which the Iowa situs property in the gross estate is the numerator and the total gross estate is the denominator.

Liabilities secured by a lien on property are allocated to the state of situs. If the secured liability exceeds the value of the security, any excess is prorated in the same manner as an unsecured liability.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 450.7(1), 450.12, 450.22, 450.24, 450.38, 450.89, 633.278, and 633.374.

[ARC 1137C, IAB 10/30/13, effective 12/4/13; ARC 1545C, IAB 7/23/14, effective 8/27/14; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 11/2/22; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 11/2/22; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 10/18/23]