

10 Important Facts About Your VA Burial Benefits

COURTESY OF YOUR LOCAL DIGNITY MEMORIAL® PROVIDERS



1 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits do not cover all the funeral or cremation arrangements of honorably discharged veterans.

Certain monetary, recognition and service benefits may be available. However, reimbursement for funeral or cremation service expenses is limited and usually only applies when:

- > The veteran died because of a service-related disability, OR
- > The veteran was receiving or was entitled to receive a VA pension or compensation at the time of death, OR
- > The veteran died while hospitalized by VA, or while receiving care under contract at a non-VA facility.

Standard guidelines are provided as an overview, but only the VA can rule on your exact benefits. For exact eligibility requirements, please visit www.Cem.VA.gov/Burial_Benefits.

2 You will need documentation to verify military service.

You will normally be required to provide a *Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty* document to verify military service. (Before 1950 it was commonly known as the Report of Separation, which includes the documents WD AGO 53-55, NAVPERS 553, NAVMC 78PD or NAVCG 553. After 1950 it is known as the DD 214). All documents are forms of a veteran's discharge papers.

3 A veteran's family must request a United States flag.

Upon the request of the family, a flag is provided by the VA at no cost to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran. Generally, the flag is given to the next of kin. Only one flag may be provided per veteran. An *Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes* (VA Form 27-2008) must be submitted along with a copy of the veteran's discharge papers. Flags may be obtained from VA regional offices and most U.S. Post Offices. Your Dignity Memorial provider can help your family request your flag.

Note: If the claimant is unable to provide documentary proof, a flag may be issued when a statement is made by a person of established character and reputation that he/she personally knows the deceased to have been a veteran who meets the eligibility criteria.

4 Military funeral honors ceremonies must be scheduled in advance.

Upon the family's request, every eligible veteran may receive a military funeral honors ceremony, which includes the folding and presentation of the United States flag and the playing of "Taps."

A Dignity Memorial professional can work with various veterans organizations to assist in the provision of military funeral honors on behalf of the veteran's family.

5 Veterans' caskets are not free.

As a standard policy, neither the VA nor the various branches of service provide a free casket for a deceased veteran, unless death occurs while on active duty. Through our unique relationship with American Legion departments in specific states and with the Veterans of Foreign Wars nationally, Dignity Memorial providers offer caskets and other merchandise at a discounted price to their members.

6 A Presidential Memorial Certificate may be requested.

Provided through a program initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, an engraved *Presidential Memorial Certificate* signed by the current president is provided to families to pay tribute to the memory of honorably discharged, deceased veterans.

Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail. A Dignity Memorial professional can assist your family in obtaining this certificate.

7 If you choose not to be buried in a VA national cemetery, monetary burial benefits are limited.

Veterans buried in a private cemetery may be eligible to receive a partial reimbursement for their burial costs. If a death is service-related, benefits up to \$2,000 may be paid for burial expenses.

In order to receive burial and funeral benefits, as well as plot allowances, there are specific requirements that must be met such as:

- > **The veteran died because of a service-related disability, OR**
- > **The veteran was receiving or was entitled to receive a VA pension or compensation at the time of death, OR**
- > **The veteran died while hospitalized by VA, or while receiving care under contract at a non-VA facility.**

The final amounts will be determined by eligibility and are at the discretion of the VA.

In order to determine the final reimbursement amount, an *Application for Burial Benefits* (VA Form 21P-530) must be submitted within two years from the date of the veteran's permanent burial.

The National Cemetery Administration's mission is to honor veterans and their eligible family members with their final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation. To learn more about the NCA visit **www.Cem.VA.Gov** or call **1-800-698-2411**.

8 There are eligibility requirements for burial in a VA national cemetery.

Any member of the Armed Forces who dies while on active duty or any veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable is entitled to burial in a VA national cemetery. Under certain conditions, the surviving spouse and minor children of an eligible person may also be entitled to this benefit. The spouse, surviving spouse or dependent of an eligible veteran or member of the Armed Forces may be eligible for interment in a national cemetery even if that veteran is not buried or memorialized in a national cemetery.

VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES PRE-NEED ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATIONS

The VA now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program, upon request, individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery.

Interested individuals may submit VA Form 40-10007, *Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery* and supporting documentation, such as a DD Form 214, to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov; or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

The VA will review applications and provide written notice of its determination of eligibility. The VA will save determinations and supporting documentation in an electronic information system to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. Because laws and personal circumstances change, upon receipt of a burial request, the VA will validate all pre-need determinations in accordance with the laws in effect at that time.

In addition, non-veteran parents may be buried in a national cemetery with their child if that child was killed in combat and has no other eligible survivors. In order for such burial to occur, an official must determine that there is available space.

Burial in a VA national cemetery includes:

- > **An assigned gravesite (if space is available).**
- > **Opening and closing of the grave.**
- > **A grave liner for casket.**
- > **A government headstone or marker.**
- > **Perpetual care at no cost to the family.**

The ashes of a cremated veteran or family members are buried or placed in VA national cemeteries in the same manner and with the same honors as a casket.

If you are considering burial in a VA national cemetery, you should be aware of the following:

- > **VA national cemeteries do not allow you to reserve space ahead of time, arrangements are to be made at the time of death.**
- > **Burials in VA national cemeteries are usually not conducted on weekends.**

We work with national cemeteries throughout the U.S. to provide funeral services for eligible veterans.

Burials in Arlington National Cemetery require a special knowledge of protocol and logistics. Our established firms in the metropolitan Washington, DC area have knowledgeable associates with years of experience coordinating these ceremonies. To ensure the highest quality of service, Dignity Memorial® providers will transfer responsibility for all Arlington National Cemetery services to these experienced professionals.

Please visit www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility to verify eligibility requirements.

9 Headstones, markers or medallions for a burial space in a private cemetery must be requested.

Any deceased veteran discharged under conditions other than dishonorable is eligible for a standard government headstone, marker or medallion. The VA, upon request and at no charge to the applicant, will furnish a government headstone or marker for the grave of any deceased eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world. A bronze medallion in several sizes is also available to be placed on existing privately purchased headstones or markers. The government is not responsible for costs associated with affixing the medallion to the privately purchased headstone or marker.

Upright headstones are available in granite or marble, and flat markers are available in granite, marble or bronze. The style must be consistent with existing monuments or markers at the place of burial. Niche markers for cremated remains are also available.

An *Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veteran's Cemetery* (VA Form 40-1330) must be submitted for headstones or markers. VA Form 40-1330M must be submitted if requesting the medallion.

10 The issuance or replacement of military service medals, awards and decorations must be requested in writing.

For deceased veterans, requests for medals will be accepted from the next of kin. Requests should be submitted in writing to the appropriate military service branch division of the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). To submit a request, use Standard Form 180. There is generally no charge for medal or award replacements.

For more information, or for the mailing address of the military branch office to submit your request to, call **1-866-272-6272** or visit the NPRC website. If your family does not have the necessary form, a Dignity Memorial provider will help secure one.

[CLICK HERE to schedule an appointment with our planning experts or visit \[www.DignityMemorial.com\]\(http://www.DignityMemorial.com\) to find a provider near you.](#)



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