

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.

There is a common belief that the VA pays for all the funeral or cremation arrangements of an honorably discharged veteran. There are certain monetary, recognition and service benefits that may be available. However, reimbursement for funeral or cremation service expenses is limited and usually only applies when the following has occurred:

- > 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.

A "Report of Separation From the Armed Forces of the United States" (discharge papers) is normally required to verify military service.

In most cases, this report is the "DD 214." If this report or its equivalent is not available, a "Request Pertaining To Military Records, Standard Form 180" can be sent to the Military National Personnel Record Center. A copy of the Report of Separation will be mailed to the veteran, deceased veteran's next of kin or other persons or organizations that are authorized to receive it.

If your family does not have the deceased veteran's DD 214 or discharge papers at the time of death, any Dignity Memorial provider will be glad to help secure one.

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

A flag is provided 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.

Upon the request of the family, 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.

For your family's convenience, your Dignity Memorial provider will be glad to help them request your flag.

4 Military funeral honors ceremonies must be scheduled in advance.

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

The ceremony is performed by a military funeral honors detail consisting of two or more uniformed military persons and at least one person who is a member of the veteran's branch of the Armed Forces.

This Department of Defense program calls for the funeral director to request military funeral honors on behalf of the veteran's family.

Your Dignity Memorial provider works with various veteran's organizations to assist in the provision of military funeral honors.

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.

6 A "Presidential Memorial Certificate" must be requested.

Initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, a "Presidential Memorial Certificate" is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged, deceased veterans.

Eligible recipients of the certificate include the deceased veteran's next of kin and loved ones. More than one certificate may be requested.

Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail.

Your local Dignity Memorial provider 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.

As of 2017, and based on eligibility requirements described, the VA will pay up to \$762 toward burial and funeral expenses for deaths on or after October 1, 2017 (if hospitalized by the VA at time of death), or \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses (if not hospitalized by the VA at time of death), and a \$762 plot-interment allowance (if not buried in a VA National Cemetery). For deaths on or after December 1, 2001, but before October 1, 2011, the VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses and a \$300 plot-interment allowance. For deaths on or after April 1, 1988 but before October 1, 2011, the VA will pay \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses (for Veterans hospitalized by the VA at the time of death).

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An annual increase in burial and plot allowances for deaths occurring after October 1, 2011 begins in fiscal year 2013 based on the Consumer Price Index for the preceding 12-month period.

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. If your family does not have the Form 21P-530 at the time of death, your Dignity Memorial provider will help secure one.

There are eligibility requirements for burial in a VA National Cemetery.

In general, any member of the Armed Forces of the United States 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 unremarried surviving spouse and minor children of an eligible person are also entitled to this benefit.

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-214, if readily available, 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.

House Bill 3219, passed in 2010, makes

provisions for non-veteran parents to be interred in a National Cemetery with their child if their child was killed in combat or training and space is available.

Burial in a VA National Cemetery includes:

- > an assigned gravesite (if space is available)
- > opening and closing of the grave
- > a grave liner for casketed remains
- > a Government headstone or marker
- > perpetual care at no cost to the family

Cremated remains are buried or inurned in VA National Cemeteries in the same manner and with the same honors as casketed remains.

You May Not Reserve Space In a VA National Cemetery Ahead Of Time.

VA National Cemeteries only allow arrangements to be made at the time of death. So if you are not choosing burial in a private cemetery, there is no guarantee that spouses or other family members will be interred side-by-side, or even nearby.

Burials In VA National Cemeteries Are Usually Not Conducted On Weekends.

When there are relatives or funeral dignitaries who are attending from out of town, it is important to note that the weekend arrangements private cemeteries will almost always make are not generally provided by VA National Cemeteries.

Your local Dignity Memorial provider will assist you in selecting a cemetery location anywhere in America.

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.

If your family does not have form 40-1330 or VA form 40-1330M, your Dignity Memorial provider will help secure one.

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

Military service medals, awards and decorations are available from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) which is under the jurisdiction of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Family members may request medals and awards for living veterans only if they have obtained their signed authorization. For deceased veterans, requests will be accepted from the next-of-kin (unremarried widow or widower, son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister of the deceased veteran.)

Requests should be submitted in writing to the appropriate military service branch division of the NPRC. Standard Form 180 (SF 180), available through the VA, is recommended to submit your request. Generally, there is 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, please call 1-86-NARA-NARA (1-866-272-6272) or visit the NPRC website at www.archives.gov.

If your family does not have form SF 180 at the time of death, any Dignity Memorial provider will be glad to help secure one.

CLICK HERE to schedule an appointment with our planning experts or visit www.DignityMemorial.com to find a provider near you.



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