



**QUICK GUIDE**



# Veterans' Burial Benefits



# QUICK GUIDE VETERANS' BURIAL BENEFITS

**THANK YOU** you for serving our nation with commitment and courage. Not everyone gives a part of their life to protect our nation, and for your service, thank you.

Did you know that your time in the Armed Forces may make you eligible for certain burial benefits that could help alleviate the cost of a funeral?

The Veterans Administration (VA) offers financial assistance and benefits that will help you plan a healing and meaningful funeral ceremony that reflects your life, your beliefs, and your values. While they don't cover every cost associated with a funeral, these benefits are helpful!

With the information you learn about these important topics, you can make decisions you will feel good about today and your family will be comforted by in the future.





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## YOUR BURIAL BENEFITS AS A VETERAN

The first step is to determine [if you are eligible](#) to receive the burial benefits available through the Veterans Administration. The main thing to remember is that those who received honorable or general discharges qualify, while those who received dishonorable discharges do not qualify. If you have questions about your eligibility, contact your local VA office.

Dependents and survivors of veterans may also be eligible for VA benefits. This means that your current spouse and any dependents are also eligible to receive certain burial benefits because of your service.

The main burial benefits available to veterans include *(at no cost to your family)*:

- **BURIAL ALLOWANCES**
- **INTERMENT AT A NATIONAL CEMETERY**
- **HEADSTONE OR GRAVE MARKER**
- **BURIAL FLAG WITH MILITARY HONORS**
- **PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE**



*Let's take a moment to look  
at each benefit individually.*

## BURIAL ALLOWANCES

### ***What is a burial allowance?***

Generally speaking, the reimbursement is described as two payments:

- 1. A burial and funeral expense allowance**  
*(associated with funeral or memorial options)*
- 2. A plot interment allowance**  
*(associated with burial costs)*

In a nutshell, [burial allowances](#) are designated dollar amounts that the VA will reimburse to your family to assist with the cost of a veteran's funeral. To receive this benefit, your family must apply following your death (or the death of a spouse or dependent child). The VA will direct deposit the determined amount into your family's account after the application is approved. Make sure receipts are included with the application.

### ***How does my family apply?***

Your family can [apply by filling out VA Form 21P-530](#), "Application for Burial Allowance." They should attach proof of military service (DD 214 or equivalent), a death certificate, and receipts if they would like to claim reimbursement. Mail the completed form and documents to the nearest VA Regional Office. Alternatively, you can complete the application process online or work directly with a VA Veteran Services Officer.





## **CEMETERY INTERMENT BENEFITS**

Choosing a final resting place is a very personal decision, and it's always good to know your options. In the VA's eyes, there are three types of cemeteries:

- 1. NATIONAL**
- 2. STATE VETERANS**
- 3. PRIVATE**



*Let's review each one and the benefits available for each.*

## 1. NATIONAL CEMETERY

In addition to burial allowances, the VA also offers burial (cremated or full body) in a national cemetery through the [National Cemetery Administration](#). This benefit includes a plot, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, and a government-issued headstone. While placement is based on availability, you, your spouse, and any dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Of course, as with anything, there are certain rules and guidelines.

There is no charge for a burial plot in a national cemetery. Because of this, the plot allowance is not available to the families of veterans who are buried in a national cemetery. In some cases, the VA may even pay for the cost of transporting a deceased veteran to the national cemetery. Speak to your regional VA office to get more details.

## 2. STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

A second option for burial is a state veterans cemetery. These cemeteries are facilitated by the individual states, not by the National Cemetery Administration, so the regulations will vary. Because of this, you or a funeral professional will need to [contact your nearby state veterans cemetery](#) to see if there are any fees associated with burial there and if they allow dependents to be buried on the grounds.

## 3. PRIVATE CEMETERY

If you choose burial in a privately-run cemetery, then you and your family must pay for cemetery costs on your own, though you may be eligible for the plot allowance to help. Again, you are still eligible to receive a government-issued headstone. Spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery receive no benefits.



## GOVERNMENT-ISSUED HEADSTONES OR MEDALLIONS

### *Headstones*

As we discussed in the previous section, the VA will provide a government-issued headstone to mark the grave of an eligible veteran buried in a national, military post/base, state veterans, or private cemetery. If you want, you can even request a government headstone for eligible dependents if they are not buried in a private cemetery.

### *Medallions*

If you decide to be buried in a private cemetery, you can request to receive a medallion rather than a government-issued headstone. Medallions are durable and can be easily affixed to any headstone. They offer you a way to identify as a veteran while also choosing a personalized grave marker. There are different varieties of headstones and medallions available. [Click here](#) to view the options available through the National Cemetery Administration.



## BURIAL FLAG WITH MILITARY HONORS

Because the American flag is a symbol of your service and sacrifice, its presence is a tribute to your life and your values. Due to its importance, the VA provides an American flag to drape the casket or urn, and after the funeral service, the flag is given to the next of kin. Only one flag is issued per veteran. In addition, eligible veterans may receive military honors at a funeral service, which includes folding and presenting the United States burial flag and the playing of "Taps." For more information, [click here](#).

## PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATES

Finally, the VA offers a [Presidential Memorial Certificate](#) (PMC), which is an engraved certificate, signed by the current President, that is given to honor your memory and your service.

So, these five elements make up the basic lineup of burial benefits that are available to an eligible veteran: burial allowances, burial in a national cemetery, government-issued headstone or medallion, burial flag, and Presidential Memorial Certificate. There are many details to the whole process, which is why it's important to work with a funeral professional and your local VA office to ensure you have all the answers you need.





***Now that you have a good understanding of your burial benefits as a veteran, you may be wondering, "What should I do next?"***



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[www.funeraldirectorslife.com](http://www.funeraldirectorslife.com)

## RESOURCES AND NEXT STEPS

1. First, talk to a funeral director at a local funeral home. They can help you sift through all the necessary details and ensure that you have covered all the bases. Plus, they can help you brainstorm ideas for a meaningful service based on their own experience and what they've seen done in the past.
2. Visit your local VA office, so you can review your benefits as a veteran. They will also be able to direct you to the National Cemetery Administration's [preplanning department](#).
3. Complete a Thoughtful Decisions Guide. By filling out this helpful document, you will start the process of putting your wishes in writing so that both you and your family can have peace of mind for the future. Knowing your wishes takes a lot of the stress and worry out of planning a final tribute, so it's a compassionate next step. [Click here to download a Thoughtful Decisions Guide for yourself!](#)

Before you go, you might also consider downloading these two checklists: the [Funeral Planning Checklist](#) and the [Veterans' Benefits Checklist](#). As you get all the details in order, these items will help you take care of all the details and ask all the right questions.