

Veterans Burial Benefits Guide

Tips for End-of-Life & Survivors' Benefits Eligibility

*Available through the U.S. Department of Veterans
Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration*





Introduction to Benefits

In 1865, President Abraham Lincoln promised that a grateful nation would “care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.” Among the ways our country shows its appreciation for these sacrifices is by providing burial and memorial benefits to current and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces. In this a sacred trust is fulfilled – a nation honors in death those who honored their nation in life.

AARP brings together valuable resources to help you navigate options on caregiving, fighting fraud, finding employment, and connecting with your military service benefits, including this Veterans Burial Benefits Guide.

“Our mission is to honor every individual who’s served this nation and to ensure that they are never forgotten....We will help that family through it. It’s why we do what we do.”

MATTHEW QUINN,
VA’s Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs

The Application Process

Follow these Four Steps for Making Arrangements in Advance

1. Determine eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery by visiting [VA.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility).
2. Choose a VA national cemetery. State cemeteries should be contacted before filing a pre-need application, some have other specific requirements.
3. Gather the supporting documentation you'll need. In most cases it is a DD Form 214. Fax eligibility documentation to **1-866-900-6417** or scan and email to NCA.Scheduling@va.gov.
4. Fill out an application for each person requesting a pre-need determination at [VA.gov/burials-memorials](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials).



6 Tips to Know About VA End-of-Life Benefits

1. Burial Benefits are Not Just for Combat Veterans

Most veterans who didn't receive a dishonorable discharge **are eligible for a burial benefit**. A spouse or minor child of a veteran is also eligible and, in some cases, an unmarried adult dependent child of a veteran.

2. Advance Planning is Not Required

Families can contact the NCA if a veteran dies unexpectedly and hasn't filed their pre-need eligibility. If a family doesn't know where the veteran's records are, the NCA can help. If a veteran didn't request to be buried in a military cemetery, eligibility can still be established to receive a marker at a private cemetery. **Contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-800-535-1117.**

3. Burial Benefits are Not Limited to Military Cemeteries

VA provides **a standard issue headstone or marker, free of charge**. Eligibility requirements are different, but combat service is still not required. In most cases, spouses are eligible for burial next to the veteran at little or no cost.

THERE ARE 155 NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERIES AND 119 MORE STATE, TERRITORY OR TRIBAL-OPERATED CEMETERIES IN THE U.S. AND ITS TERRITORIES.

4. Expense Reimbursements Eligibility

Depending on the veteran's service history and where he or she is buried, VA may pay a burial allowance or payment of up to **\$2,000** to help cover certain expenses. Otherwise, benefits may include a grave site in any of the national cemeteries where space is available, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate — at no cost to the family.

5. VA Burial Benefits Underutilized

In 2020, over 80,000 veterans were interred at VA's national cemeteries, representing only about **14%** of those who died during the same time period, according to U.S. Census data and other government estimates. In private cemeteries, more than 150,000 headstones or markers were distributed from the VA for veterans' grave sites.

6. Veteran cemetery burials include a memorial web page

Family members can visit the unique web page of any veteran who's buried in a national, state, territorial or tribal cemetery and post photos, documents or memories in what is called the **Veterans Legacy Memorial**.

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION, THE NATIONAL MEDIAN COST OF A FUNERAL AT A PRIVATE CEMETERY IS MORE THAN \$7,000 IN 2021.

Resources

AARP

AARP is on a mission to support Veterans and Military Families. With over five million members nationwide who have served our country, AARP has a long history of providing free resources, important information, and timely programming to meet your unique needs. AARP makes it quick and easy to access those free resources and other tools for veteran caregiving, fighting fraud through Operation Protect Veterans, finding employment, and connecting to military service benefits at aarp.org/veterans.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Need to speak directly to a VA representative about burial, survivors' pension, or other benefits? Contact VA at **1-877-294-6380**.

VA forms change periodically; current versions can be found at [VA.gov/find-forms](https://va.gov/find-forms).





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