

Guide to

Understanding Veterans Benefits



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Overview

“A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” –Joseph Campbell

If you are an honorably discharged Veteran who has completed the required service period, you – or your family – may be eligible for burial benefits. These benefits are not automatic and must be applied for, and can help cover burial costs, provide a gravesite in a national cemetery, and obtain military honors.

Veterans Benefits

Veterans, service members, spouses, and dependents may qualify for burial in a VA national cemetery and other benefits if they meet certain eligibility criteria.

The person qualifying for burial benefits is:

- A Veteran who didn't receive a dishonorable discharge
- A service member who died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty for training
- A spouse or minor child of a veteran, even if the Veteran died first
- In some cases, an unmarried adult dependent child of a Veteran

Notes

Other eligibility may be necessary for specific groups or in time of war.

One of these relationships or professional roles describes your connection to the Veteran:

- You're the Veteran's surviving spouse (Note: VA recognizes same-sex marriages).
- You're the surviving partner from a legal union (a relationship made formal in a document issued by the state recognizing the union).
- You're a surviving child of the Veteran.
- You're a parent of the Veteran.
- You're the executor or administrator of the Veteran's estate (someone who officially represents the Veteran).

Veterans Benefits

(Continued)

Veterans, service members, spouses, and dependents may be eligible for burial in a VA National Cemetery, as well as other benefits.

If you are eligible the person applying will receive:

- VA burial allowance for burial and funeral costs
- VA plot or interment allowance for the cost of the plot or interment
- VA transportation reimbursement for the cost of transporting the Veteran's remains to the final resting place
- An allowance for the cost of transporting a Veteran's remains for burial in a national cemetery

Notes

Payment for these services or other costs must be made before you apply for an allowance.

If an eligible person or family elects burial in a private cemetery, they may receive memorial items like:

- Headstone, Marker, or Medallion
- Burial Flag
- Presidential Memorial Certificate

*A spouse or dependent child buried in a private cemetery is not eligible for VA memorial items. Only the eligible Veteran can receive these items.

Typically, the only items or reimbursements a Veteran is eligible for are memorial items. However, in some cases allowances are available to help pay for a Veteran's burial and funeral.

Veterans Benefits

(Continued)

The Veteran must not have received a dishonorable discharge, and one of these circumstances must be true:

- The Veteran died as a result of a service-connected disability (a disability related to service), or
- The Veteran died while getting VA care, either at a VA facility or at a facility contracted by VA, or
- The Veteran died while traveling with proper authorization, and at VA's expense, either to or from a facility for an examination, or to receive treatment or care, or
- The Veteran died with an original or reopened claim for VA compensation or pension pending at the time of death, and would've been entitled to benefits before the time of death, or
- The Veteran died while receiving a VA pension or compensation, or
- The Veteran died while eligible for a VA pension or compensation at time of death, but instead received full military retirement or disability pay
- The Veteran had been getting a VA pension or compensation when they died, or
- The Veteran had chosen to get military retired pay instead of compensation

*Certain individuals do not qualify for burial allowances.

Burial allowances are not provided if the deceased:

- Died during active military service
- Was a member of Congress who died while holding office
- Was serving a federal prison sentence

Resources

Check eligibility and learn how to prearrange burial in a VA cemetery:

www.va.gov/burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility/

Find answers to common questions about VA national cemeteries:

www.cem.va.gov/cem/faq.asp

Explore burial benefits and services available through the VA:

www.va.gov/burials-memorials/

Learn how to request a headstone, marker, or medallion for a Veteran:

www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/

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