



# 10 Important Facts

About Your VA Burial Benefits

Dignity<sup>®</sup>  
MEMORIAL

# 10

## Important Facts About Your VA Benefits



As a veteran you may qualify for certain funeral benefits – but they don't come automatically. In most cases someone

must request them, which can be time-consuming and stressful for your family. Dignity Memorial® providers are available to assist you with preparing your request before they are needed.

**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 to veterans who:

- ◆ *Retire from the Armed Services, or*
- ◆ *Were disabled due to a service-related injury, or*
- ◆ *Died in a VA hospital or while in a nursing home under VA contract.*

Standard guidelines are provided as an overview, but only the VA can rule on your exact benefits.

**2 You will need documentation to verify military service.**  
You will normally be required to provide “Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty,” (DD Form 214) also known as discharge papers, to verify military service. If your family does not have DD Form 214 at the time of death, a Dignity Memorial provider will help you 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. An “Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes” (VA Form 21-2008) 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 will help your family request your flag.

**4 Military funeral honors ceremonies must be scheduled in advance.**

The law entitles every eligible veteran to receive a military funeral honors ceremony, which includes the folding and presentation of the United States flag and the playing of “Taps,” upon the family’s request.

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 veterans 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.

As part of our service to veterans, Dignity Memorial providers offer caskets and other merchandise at a discounted price to members of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).



**6 A “Presidential Memorial Certificate” must be requested.**

Provided through a program initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, an engraved paper “Presidential Memorial Certificate” signed by the current President is provided to families to honor 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. 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.

For non-service-related deaths on or after Oct. 1, 2011, a burial expense allowance of up to \$700 and a plot allowance of up to \$700 will be provided by the VA. These amounts, which replace the previous allowances of \$300 for each portion, may be adjusted annually by



the VA. As always, any allowance paid is at the sole discretion of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In order to determine the final reimbursement amount, an “Application for Burial Benefits” (VA Form 21-530) must be submitted within two years from the date of the veteran’s permanent burial. If your family does not have the form 21-530 at the time of death, your Dignity Memorial provider will help secure one.

## **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.

In addition, non-veteran parents may be interred 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 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.

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

- ◆ *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 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.*



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, D.C. area have knowledgeable staff 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.

## **9 Headstones or markers for a burial space in a private cemetery must be requested.**

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

In lieu of a traditional headstone or marker, the VA may provide a 1.5-inch, 3-inch or 5-inch bronze medallion for veterans whose deaths occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. The medallion, which must be requested, may be affixed to the existing headstone or marker to signify the deceased's status as a veteran.

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. If your family does not have form 40-1330 at the time of death, your Dignity Memorial provider will help secure one.

## **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 (SF-180), available through the VA or downloadable through the NPRC website. 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 at [www.archives.gov/veterans/](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/). If your family does not have the necessary form, a Dignity Memorial provider will help secure one.



To learn more or to locate a Dignity Memorial provider in your community, please call **1-800-344-6489** or visit us at **[www.DignityMemorial.com](http://www.DignityMemorial.com)**.

