



# **Veteran Death Benefits and Memorialization for Service Members and Their Families**

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CREMATION SERVICES<sup>®</sup>



Whether your family is dealing with the immediate needs following the loss of a loved one, or you're making end-of-life plans for yourself, it's important to understand all the options available to you. For veterans and their surviving next of kin, those options may include military honors, certain aspects of memorial services, or even VA benefits to help cover the costs of burial or cremation. This document provides a comprehensive look at everything veterans and their families might need to know about making final arrangements and how veteran death benefits can play a role in that process.



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# What Are Veteran Death Benefits?

Veteran death benefits are any funeral or memorial services that are performed directly by the military branches or which are financially covered or partially covered via VA benefits. The types of benefits someone is eligible for depend on a variety of factors, including the person's service and discharge record, how long they served, and the circumstances surrounding his or her death. Some examples of veteran death benefits include a government-provided headstone or marker, military honor guard and flag ceremonies at a funeral, and reimbursement for part of the cost of a burial or cremation.

## Death Benefits for Veterans Themselves

The typical basic requirements for death benefits for veterans are detailed below.

- Service in one of the branches of the military (see the section describing each branch to understand what service is considered)
- A discharge status that is anything but dishonorable (see appendix for more information on discharge statuses)

## Who Is Eligible for Veteran Death Benefits?

Each type of benefit has unique eligibility requirements, but in general, some benefit is afforded to any veteran who meets the minimum requirements (defined below). Spouses and children of eligible veterans may also have access to death benefits.



# What Are Veteran Death Benefits?

- The vet or family must usually be able to provide documentation of service and discharge status, which is done with the DD-214 Form. You can find out more about this form, including how to obtain a copy of it, in the section about applying for death benefits.

## Benefits for Surviving Spouses and Children

If a vet is eligible for death benefits and burial in one of the 135 national cemeteries located across the nation, then his or her spouse and dependents are likely also eligible for burial in the same cemetery. This benefit allows spouses and certain dependents to be buried alongside their loved ones, but the eligible dependents and spouse can still be buried in the location even if they pass away before the veteran does.

Burial in a national cemetery includes perpetual care of the grave or urn site, and the name of the individual and dates of birth and death are also inscribed on the vet's headstone (children and spouses do not receive their own headstones).

In addition to receiving burial benefits in a national cemetery, surviving spouses and children may be eligible for certain benefits and opportunities, including:

### **Dependency and Indemnification Compensation (DIC)**

This may be paid out to eligible survivors of a veteran who died as a result of his or her service-related illness or injury. This benefit may also be available to surviving spouses and children of active service members are killed in the line of duty.

### **Death pension**

Pensions may be available to children or spouses of eligible veterans who served during wartime if the children or spouses aren't eligible for DIC. A surviving spouse may be eligible until such time he or she remarries; a surviving child is eligible until either their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, depending on whether he or she is a student. If a dependent was ill or injured prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and that incident led to a permanent disability, the dependent might be eligible for death pension benefits regardless of age or student status.

## What Is Included in Veteran Death Benefits from the VA?

Memorialization options for veterans can vary greatly by circumstance and according to service details, but all veterans who are discharged other than dishonorable and otherwise meet the VA requirements for benefits are provided with a financial benefit to help cover the cost of burial or cremation. This is known as the burial and plot allowance, and it's administered by the VA.

The benefit is processed as a reimbursement up to a certain amount. This means that the family must pay for the services and present appropriate documentation to the VA to receive reimbursement. Reimbursement can take weeks or even months to process, but families may be able to help expedite the process by working with a local funeral provider and/or the local VA office to ensure the forms are completed in a timely manner.

The amount of reimbursement benefit depends on the circumstances of the veteran's death. Each circumstance, along with the maximum reimbursement amount, is detailed below.

- If an eligible veteran passes away because of conditions, circumstances, illnesses, or injuries directly related to military service, the VA will reimburse up to \$2,000 for plot and burial or cremation allowance. Note that this is not the same thing as dying in active duty, as that type of benefit is handled by a different process.

- If an eligible veteran passes away and it is not related to their military service, the VA reimburses up to \$300 for plot and burial or cremation allowance.
- If an eligible veteran passes away and it's not related to their military service but they pass away while hospitalized by the VA or in official transport to a VA facility (such as in an ambulance), the VA will reimburse up to \$749 for plot and burial or cremation allowance.

Because the benefit is set up as a reimbursement, the next of kin must file for it and show proof that burial or cremation services were purchased. If someone donates these services to the family, for example, then the family cannot also seek the VA reimbursement.

NOLO provides some more information about survivorship benefits and how to apply for them. Because survivorship benefits can be quite confusing (as you can probably tell by the above paragraphs), it may also be a good idea to visit the local VA administrative office to speak with someone who can clarify which benefits you and your children are eligible for and how to apply for them.

# How Do Veterans or Their Families Apply for VA Death Benefits?

This section discusses how to apply for the reimbursement benefit from the VA to help cover the cost of a veteran's burial or cremation.

Information about applying or accessing memorialization benefits, such as a military Honor Guard, is included in the section on memorialization options for veterans. Note that the reimbursement for burial or plot allowance can instead be used for cremation services, and all the same requirements apply.

Veterans themselves will not be able to apply for plot or burial allowance to cover their own burial, as one of the requirements of the VA is that proof of death is included with the application. As such, the application typically has to be completed by the veteran's next of kin (usually, this is a spouse, child, parent, or sibling). The next of kin may be able to delegate some of this task to another family member, work with a representative at the local VA, or seek help from a funeral or cremation provider.

## Evidence Requirements for VA Death Benefits

The VA does require that some documentation be presented before it will issue a reimbursement check for plot or burial expenses. First, it requires proof of death. This is typically provided in the form of a death certificate; if you are requesting certified copies of the death certificate from a funeral service provider, remember that you'll need copies for VA applications as well as insurance companies, banks, and other entities where the deceased had accounts.

The VA requires receipts showing how much money was paid for burial or cremation services. In addition to receipts detailing the payments, you should include a statement of account printed by the crematory, cemetery, or funeral home. The statement must include:

- The name of the deceased
- A list of merchandise and services with relevant costs attached

- Credits applied to the account
- The amount of unpaid balance if applicable

You'll also need to include proof of service and discharge status via a Form DD-214. See the section below on exactly what this form is and how to request one.

## Applying for a Reimbursement

Once you've gathered all this information, you can complete the application for a reimbursement. The application isn't a form seeking approval for the benefit — if the veteran in question meets the aforementioned requirements, the benefit is already approved. You simply have to document that the appropriate circumstances have all been met. This is done via VA Form 21-530, Application for Burial Allowance.

The form can be completed via the [eBenefits gateway](#) or at a VA regional office. Talk to your funeral or cremation service provider about this form and applying for benefits; in some cases, they may also be able to assist you. For more information or to apply for a reimbursement, families can visit the [VA's burial benefits claims page](#).

## What You Need to Know About the DD-214

The DD-214, also called the DD214 or the DD Form 214, can play a large role in accessing veteran benefits. This form has been the official discharge form of the United States military since the 1950s; it's issued to service men and women when their tenure with any branch of the military ends for any reason. The DD-214 shows

that a person is eligible for veteran death benefits by (1) documenting when and where they served and (2) documenting that they were discharged in any status that wasn't dishonorable.

There are actually two types of DD-214 forms: a long and short version. The long form is the document that has more information about the discharge status, so it's a good idea to have this one on hand when you intend to apply for veteran benefits of any type.

### Other Forms That Replace the DD-214

For some individuals who were discharged prior to the DD-214 becoming the main method of notating discharge status, a different form might have been used. For example, the War Department Adjutant General Office Form 53-55 can stand in for the DD-214. If you have a set of paperwork documenting discharge that doesn't include a DD-214, let your funeral or cremation service provider know as soon as possible. They can help you understand if you need to seek a copy of the DD-214 or if you have a form that can be used in its place.

### How to Order a Copy of the DD-214

DD-214 Forms are not easy to replace. As such, they should be treated with the same care as other personal documents such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, or life insurance policy pages. Consider keeping them in a locked fireproof safe, a safety deposit box, or a secure filing cabinet. However, no matter how careful families are, there are many reasons paperwork might be lost, damaged, or destroyed. That's why the National Personnel Records Center has



a process for replacing DD-214 Forms. Here's a quick rundown of the most common, effective ways to replace a lost or damaged DD-214 Form.

## Requesting Your Own DD-214 Form

If you are a veteran and need to get a new copy of your form, you can make a request online with [eVetRecs](#) through the National Archives. You can also visit the link to find out information about submitting a request via fax or mail. Faxed and mailed requests must include a completed [SF-180 form](#).

In cases where a veteran can't obtain an SF-180 form, they may request certain documents related to their military service, including the DD 214, in writing via a letter. The letter has to include enough information to allow the National Archives or other record-holding entity to find your information among literally millions of records. Some information you should include in your letter (and which may be required by the SF-180 form) includes:

- Your complete name that you used while in the service
- Your Social Security number and/or service number
- The branch that you served under
- The dates you served
- Your date of birth and place you were born (this is especially required if you don't have a service number, as it can help the staff identify you)

In 1973, a fire destroyed a number of

paper records related to military service members and veterans. If there's any chance that your records could have been part of that fire, include the following information with your request:

- The location where you were discharged from
- The last unit you were assigned to
- The location where you entered the service, if possible

Fax requests for a DD-214 to 314-801-9195.

Mail requests to:

National Personnel Records Center  
Military Personnel Records  
1 Archives Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63138

## Requesting a DD-214 Form for a Deceased Veteran

If a veteran is deceased and the family needs a copy of the DD-214 forms for their records, the next of kin may complete the same processes detailed above. The National Archives defines the next of kin as:

- A widow or widower of the vet who has not remarried
- The vet's son or daughter
- Either of the vet's legal parents
- Any of the vet's siblings

The National Archives will accept a death certificate, letter from the funeral home or cremation provider or an obituary (with appropriate identifying information included) as proof of death when they are processing a request from the next of kin. If you are also requesting any records related to medical or clinical treatments for the veteran, though, you will have to [provide additional information](#).

### **How Long Does It Take to Receive a DD-214 Form?**

Most people who use any of the above methods receive the form in six to eight weeks, though it can take longer. The National Archives does provide a process for [emergency and burial requests](#). If you apply via eVetRecs, you should state that the request is urgent and that it is related to funeral or burial matters in the section titled “Comments.” If you apply via the SF-180 Form, place this information in the section titled “Purpose.” The National Archives does attempt to prioritize emergency requests, but it can’t make specific promises about when a form will be received.

Several things can delay the receipt of a DD-214. You might be surprised to learn that a large number of military records are still only accessible in paper format; this is especially true for older vets. If the original records were destroyed in the 1973 fire, it can take some time for archive researchers to locate all the necessary data to complete a new DD-214. If the veteran never registered with the VA, the records might not be on file in the most central location, which means federal employees will have to engage in searching other locations. Any of these situations can extend the time it takes to receive a DD-214 form.

### **Working With a Paid Service to Order a DD-214**

Some companies advertise that they can ensure faster receipt of a DD-214. These companies might say they send an in-person representative to the archives to file for and retrieve the DD-214. If you work with a paid service that is located near the archives and can send a person, you might see the DD-214 slightly faster than when going through the request procedures yourself. Take time to confirm this, though, as many paid services advertise a fast retrieval time and then go through the exact same process you would go through after they accept your payment. Some “services” are actually scams, taking money without doing any work at all.

**Read online reviews and check with the Better Business Bureau for reports or actions against a company before you pay someone to expedite a DD-214 request.**



### **How Much Does a DD-214 Replacement Form Cost?**

If you request the form via mail, fax, or online, its free.



# Memorialization Options for Veterans



Veterans and their families can take advantage of a number of memorialization options associated with the individual's service. Here is a look at some of the options, who is eligible for each, and what families need to do to secure such services.

## What the Law Requires for Eligible Veterans

Many families might not realize that [federal law requires](#) that the military provide some memorialization services for your loved one. In addition to the Honor Guard that is required to appear at a veteran's funeral or memorial upon appropriate request of the family, the government also provides other services, including headstones and markers and burial in a national cemetery.

### The Basic Military Honors

Basic military honors are afforded to any veteran who was discharged under any status other than dishonorable. These honors include:

- The presence of at least two military staff members in full uniform at the memorial service or burial
- The playing of Taps during the service
- A flag folding ceremony

Of the military service members present at the service, at least one must be from the branch of the military that the deceased served with.

The military does make an attempt to have Taps played by a live bugler, but this isn't always possible due to the limited number of people who play the bugle and geographic or time restrictions. When a military bugler isn't available, the cemetery or other location assists with arranging a high-quality stereo version of Taps played over loudspeakers.



The flag folding includes two or more military members who perform a short ceremony that involves folding the flag. The flag is folded 13 times, and the result of the folds is a triangle that only leaves the blue background and white stars visible. The flag is then presented to the veteran's next of kin as a token of appreciation for the deceased's service to the nation. In some cases, families work with funeral or cremation providers to have the flag placed in a keepsake or display box following the folding ceremony.

Memorial or funeral honors are requested through your funeral director or cremation provider. They can assist you with ensuring the correct contacts are made, and if you plan to have the military honors at the burial or in the cemetery, you should provide at least 72 hours' notice to cemetery management.

## 72 hours notice to cemetery management

Veterans may only receive these funeral honors one time, so families do have to make a decision about whether they want to have them as part of a burial service or as part of any separate memorial service.

### Additional Funeral Honor Elements

At the request of the family and according to local law, cemetery policies, and availability of resources, other elements can be added to the funeral honors of eligible veterans. This section describes some of the

more common elements. Families should talk to their funeral or cremation providers or cemetery management about which of these options are available to them.

### The Three Volley Rifle Detail

This is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the 21-gun salute because it traditionally involves seven riflemen firing three volleys, for a total of 21 gun shots. In reality, the 21-gun salute is often handled with artillery and is used to greet or honor visiting dignitaries or the President. The three-volley rifle fire is used to honor a deceased veteran.

Some branches, including the Air Force, don't offer this option because of a lack of resources and man power. Families will also need to check with cemeteries and local authorities to ensure that the volley will be allowed in the area.

### Pallbearers

Pallbearers are the individuals who carry or accompany the casket as it moves to the various locations during a funeral service and burial. If the Honor Guard is large enough, they can act as the only pallbearers at the service, though families might have to arrange this with the individuals involved ahead of time (remember that the military is only required to provide the Honor Guard at either the memorial service or the burial). Most military service members will serve in this regard if asked and time allows. Families may also ask the Honor Guard to serve alongside active service members and veteran service members in uniform who knew the deceased, and the pallbearers can even be made up of a group of uniformed service members and civilians in regular clothing.



## Caisson

This service traditionally involves the casket being carried through the cemetery in a horse-drawn caisson. The caisson travels from the edge of the cemetery to the burial site and is often accompanied by the Honor Guard. In some cases, the family may also accompany the vehicle.

The most common place to see the caisson service is in Arlington National Cemetery, where any veteran who is eligible for [full military honors](#) is also eligible to receive the caisson service. The caisson service in Arlington National Cemetery is even more formal than might be seen elsewhere, and it is handled by a specialty platoon of service men and women who are trained for this task. In fact, they provide the service for up to eight deceased veterans every single day!

Families that are interested in possible caisson services in other national cemeteries should talk to cemetery management about the option. It may or may not be available, and notifying the cemetery of your interest in it early can help you plan and ensure the caisson is open if the service is provided.

## Military Flyover

The Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force all provide some flyover services, and some of the state National Guard do as well. This is an option that is not available to all veterans and families, for obvious resource reasons. Flyovers are most likely available to high-ranking officers, service members who have been awarded certain medals or who are highly decorated, and those who were killed in the line of duty.

You can find more details about each branch's flyover requirements at the following links:

- [Air Force](#)
- [Navy](#)
- [Marine Corps](#)

## The Presidential Memorial Certificate

Any family who is burying a veteran in a national cemetery can request a Presidential Memorial Certificate. Families who have chosen a different final disposition for their loved one may still request the certificate if their loved

one would have been eligible as a veteran for burial in a national cemetery.

The certificate is printed on paper that is embossed with a message of gratitude for the deceased's service to the country. It is also signed by the President and makes a meaningful keepsake for many.

To request the certificate, families must complete the [Presidential Memorial Certificate Request Form](#). The form can be faxed or mailed and must be sent with documents proving the veteran's service and discharge status (the DD-214).

The Presidential Memorial Certificate Request Form can be faxed to 1-800-455-7143.

It can be mailed to:

Presidential Memorial Certification (41B3)  
National Cemetery Administration  
5109 Russell Road  
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

## Burial in a National Cemetery

While Arlington National Cemetery may be the most known, there are actually 135 national cemeteries located across the nation. The VA website provides a [convenient map](#) that helps you locate these facilities. Once on that page, simply click on the state or browse the list of states below the map to find out about any national cemeteries located within that area.

One of the reasons veterans and their eligible spouses and children might want to be buried in a national cemetery is because perpetual care is provided in these locations. That means family in the future doesn't need to worry about whether the grave site is being kept up or regularly mowed. In addition to care

for the gravesite, burial in a national cemetery also includes the following services:

- A government headstone or marker
- A burial flag
- Opening and closing of the grave site (to allow for burial of the casket or urn)

Some cemeteries are no longer offering full burial sites due to limited space, though. These cemeteries do still offer interment of cremated remains. Whether or not a family can have their loved one laid to rest in a national cemetery depends on the amount of room available in addition to the vet's eligibility.

## Government Headstone and Marker

Veterans who are eligible for any of the other services in this document are also eligible to receive a no-cost government headstone or marker. The [National Cemetery Administration](#) does state on its website that it can take up to 60 days for a gravesite to be marked in a national cemetery. Families may also request a marker or headstone for use in a private cemetery, and that headstone is also provided free of charge for eligible veterans. However, the family may still need to pay for any setting fees required to have the stone placed in a private location.

The family can choose from a flat marker or upright headstone. A flat marker is available in bronze, marble, or granite. The upright headstones are available

in marble or granite. If a columbaria is used to inurn cremated remains, a bronze niche marker may be chosen in lieu of a flat marker or upright headstone. The inscription details must be provided by the next of kin, and there is some customization available. For more information about this service, check out the extensive [National Cemetery Administration pages](#).

## Military Burial at Sea

The United States Navy does provide some limited burial at sea services for families and veterans who might be interested in this option. While the Navy carries out this service, it's not limited to retired or active Navy members. Veterans can qualify for this service by having been retired or honorably discharged from the other branches of the military as well.

Note that burial at sea through the Navy service does specifically require the honorable discharge (unlike the other benefits in this document, which were available for veterans discharged under any status that was not dishonorable). The next of kin can initiate the process for this service by completing a [Burial-at-Sea Request/Authorization Form](#) and contacting the Navy and Marine Corps Mortuary Affairs office at 1-866-787-0081 for additional information.

**Veterans can qualify for this service by having been retired or honorably discharged from the other branches of the military as well.**

## Planning Ahead for Veteran Funeral Honors

As you can see, veterans may be eligible for a wide range of benefits and funeral/memorial services. It can be very overwhelming for family members to consider and plan for these options at a time when they are dealing with grief and stress. Veterans can't completely plan ahead for these things to relieve the burden on family members, either. For example, a vet can't claim his or her place in a national cemetery early, as those places are provided on an as-needed basis.

Here are some things vets and families can do to make the tasks easier on everyone at the time of need:

- Ensure the vet has a copy of his or her DD-214 and that someone else knows where it's kept. Order a new copy of the form if it's lost.
- Make a list of everything the vet might be eligible for and what he or she might want with regard to final arrangements.
- Decide if the vet wants to be buried in a national cemetery. If not, make plans for a different cemetery location or final disposition.
- Confirm the vet's eligibility for death benefits.

# What If a Family Can't Pay for Funeral or Cremation Services?



If a veteran is indigent (he or she had no way to pay for services and the estate does not have any funds for services either) and the family is unable to pay for services, there are some options.

One option is burial in a national cemetery. The burial itself and all related costs may be covered by the veteran's benefits. The family may have to pay upfront for some transportation or related costs, but the VA offers the burial and plot allowance that can be used to cover those expenses. The burial and plot allowance can also be used to help defray the costs of cremation.

Some of the organizations and resources that provide support for vets (listed in the previous section) may offer financial or other assistance with funeral, burial, or cremation costs. Families who believe they might need this type of support should reach out as soon as possible, however. Once a deceased is moved to a crematory or funeral home, he or she can't always be moved somewhere else for preparation services.

## **Almost every state**

does have some type of support or option for indigent individuals. Families who believe they won't be able to pay for cremation or funeral services should be upfront about this when they contact service providers. The rules and programs are different in each state or local jurisdiction, and the providers in that area will best know what can be done and whether they are in a position to help.





# Neptune Society and Veteran Benefits

Neptune Society is proud to work closely with a number of veteran organizations to honor and support the men and women who served our country. We partner with both the VFW and the America Legion, which means we work with these national organizations to help serve vets, provide information about death benefits, and assist families and veterans with final arrangements. Neptune Society typically has a table at the conventions and events associated with both the American Legion and the VFW for this purpose.



We also offer special options to veterans. One such option allows family members to purchase cremation, choose an appropriate urn, receive both the Presidential certificate and the flag folding ceremony, and retain the flag in a keepsake container for display.

## Why Consider Cremation?

Cremation is one of the most affordable end-of-life options. A simple cremation is [less expensive than a burial](#), and even a cremation with a memorial service can be a more affordable option than a basic funeral and cemetery burial.

Cremation also provides families with [more options](#) for celebrating the life of their loved one. If you can't gather everyone together in a quick enough time, you can have your loved one cremated and the remains placed in an urn. Then, when loved ones are able to gather, you can have a memorial service with military honors and any other ceremonies or activities that you feel serves the deceased's

memory or supports emotional closure for friends and family.

## What Should You Bring to the Arrangement Conference?

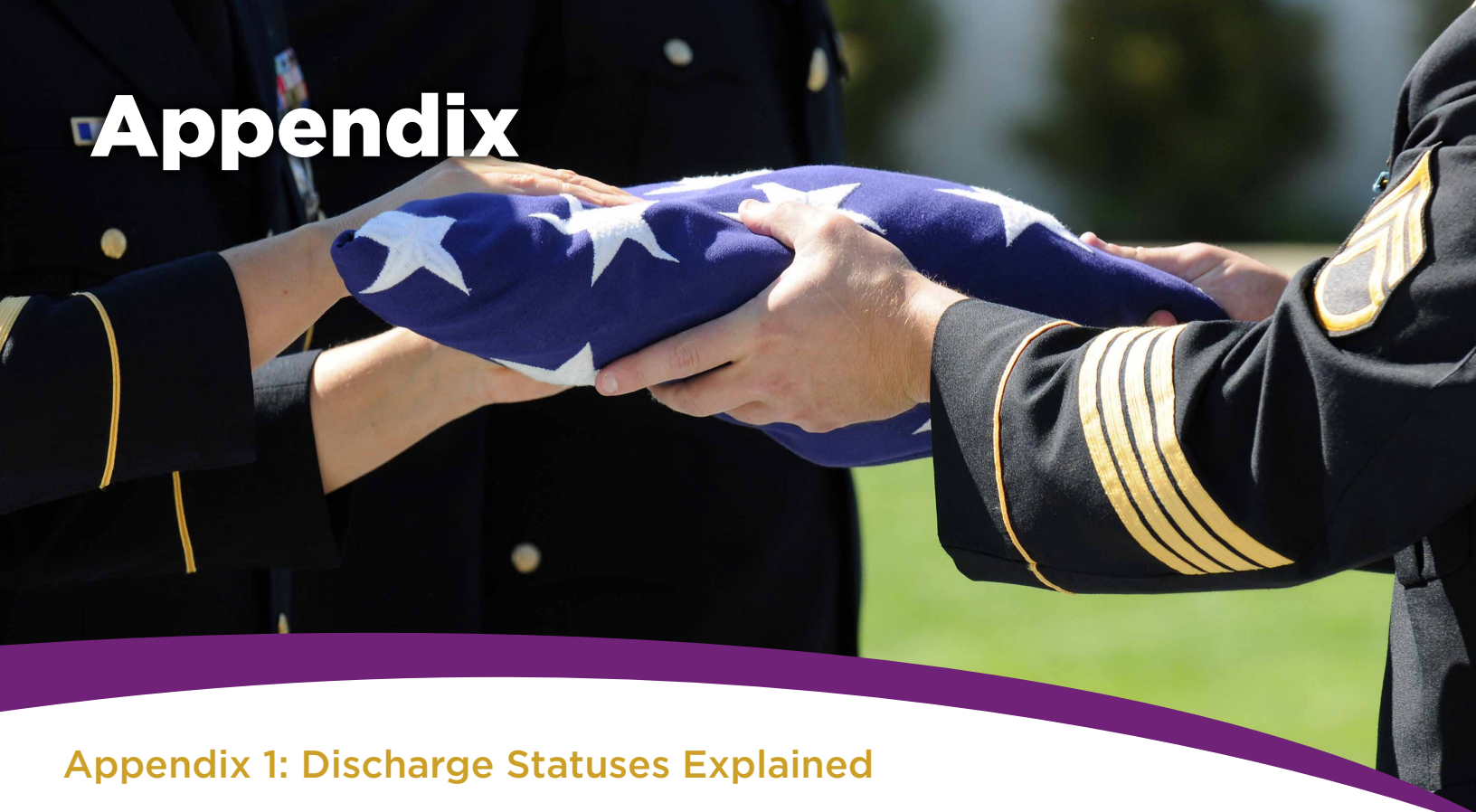
We know that this can be a time of stress, emotional upheaval, and confusion. Neptune Society can offer assistance with many tasks involved in cremating your loved one, including direction through the process and ensuring no detail falls through the cracks.

The process begins when the next of kin calls us to notify us that someone has passed away. At that time, we begin working on the arrangements and we schedule an arrangement conference, which allows us to present various options and you to make choices about those options for the final disposition of your loved one. Not every detail has to be decided at this conference, though a few important matters will need to be handled. We'll help you with all of that; you can expedite the process by bringing certain items to the meeting, including:

- Any documents regarding the deceased's last wishes
- Identifying information, including a birth certificate and social security number, for the deceased
- Date of birth, full name, and former address for the deceased
- The DD-214 or information about the veteran's service so we can help you understand what benefits might be available to you

For more information about **how Neptune Society can work with veterans** or their families on final arrangements, contact a Neptune Society office in your area.

# Appendix



## Appendix 1: Discharge Statuses Explained

### a. Honorable discharge.

- i. An honorable discharge means that a service member received a rating regarding his or her service that ranged from good to excellent (based on a scale established by the specific military branch). Typically, this status is awarded to members who complete the terms of their service while also meeting or exceeding standards. It can also be awarded to service members with shortened terms of service in cases where an early discharge was involuntary and not due to the service member's fault. This might include discharge related to a physiological or psychological condition or discharge because the military branch in question was reducing its force (this would be akin to getting laid off in the civilian world). To be eligible based on partial service, the service member must otherwise have a record that would be categorized as honorable.

### b. General or Under Honorable Conditions discharges.

- i. These discharge statuses can occur when a veteran had overall satisfactory performance, but his or her career with the military was marked in some way by conduct or circumstances that weren't fully up to the standards expected by military personnel. Under Honorable Conditions might simply indicate that the vet was discharged early because of some factor outside of his or her control, for example. The reasons for a general discharge must be fully explained in writing to the service member, and the service member may have an option to dispute any of the facts and the outcome. It's noted that military members who are discharged with this status do still have access to most VA benefits, but they might not have access to the GI Bill and some other services.



## c. Other than honorable.

- i. This discharge status is not the same as a dishonorable discharge, but it does clarify that the discharge may not have been made under honorable conditions. In many cases, the vet still retains access to VA benefits, though a Character of Service Determination from the VA might be necessary to ensure access.

## d. Dishonorable Discharge

- i. Dishonorable discharge is the most serious form of punitive discharge, reserved for the highest of offenses which are often accompanied by a prison sentence in a military prison. When members of the military are dishonorably discharged, they lose all veterans' benefits, and are forbidden from owning a firearm, working for the government, and taking out bank loans. Often, they also lose the right to vote and accept federal assistance as a civilian.

## Appendix 2: Veteran Resources and Groups: Online and Off

There are literally hundreds — if not thousands — of support groups, agencies, volunteer organizations, and online resources for veterans. The mission of these organizations ranges from assisting veterans who are returning from duty in integrating back into civilian life to helping vets who served in combat zones manage PTSD. The resources also extend to spouses, children, and caregivers of veterans. The following is an extensive, though not complete, list of resources, along with some information about the basic mission of each. Eligibility requirements and how to join or get involved are also included where relevant.

### [Veteran Organizations](#)

### [Mental Health and Crisis Assistance](#)

### [Social Support Groups](#)

### [Caregiver Support](#)

### [Financial and Veteran Benefits Resources](#)

### [Other Resources](#)

## Veteran Organizations

- [Vet Center Program](#)
  - Provides counseling and support for veterans as they adjust to life after returning home from war or combat
  - Present in many cities across the country
  - Available to veterans who served in any combat zone; eligibility details are as follows:
    - Served in an area of hostility or combat theater or

- Experienced sexual trauma as a result of military service or
- Provided direct care or death services to other individuals while serving in active duty or
- Served on a team providing unmanned aerial vehicles to combat zones or
- Is a Vietnam vet who has previously accessed the center prior to January 1, 2004
- Some services provided by this organization include:
  - Assessment for substance abuse disorder and referral for treatment if applicable
  - Sexual trauma counseling
  - Individual, group, and family counseling
  - Help with VA benefits
  - Some medical screenings and appropriate referrals

- American Legion

- Has served wartime vets since 1919
- Local chapters across the country
- Membership requires an honorable discharge or continued active service as well as service during a federally defined active war era, which are:
  - April 6, 1917, through November 11, 1918
  - December 7, 1941, through December 31, 1946
  - June 25, 1950, through January 31, 1955
  - February 28, 1961, through May 7, 1975
  - August 24, 1982, through July 31, 1984
  - December 20, 1989, through January 31, 1990
  - August 2 1990, through current day (as of July 2017)
- Some benefits afforded through the American Legion include:
  - Youth mentoring programs
  - Access to an education center
  - Access to a health center



- Access to a career center
- Ability to attend meetings and events at the local chapter house
- Potential benefits associated with financial products and assistance
- [Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America](#)
  - No dues
  - Open to all veterans but also open to civilians and family members
  - Reaches out to younger vets, targeting those who served after 9/11 primarily
  - It's an advocacy organization that raises funds and awareness for relevant causes
  - Does rely heavily on donations, including those from its members

## **Mental Health and Crisis Assistance**

- [PTSD Foundation of America](#)
  - Provides some counseling services for veterans
  - Helps veterans network with others
  - Works to raise awareness of PTSD in the public eye and raise funds for projects that help vets and families dealing with PTSD
  - Supports programs that include:
    - Camp Hope
    - Warrior Groups
      - Warrior Groups are fellowships for combat veterans and their families to share their experiences, testimonies of healing, compassion and hope in overcoming the invisible wounds of war.
    - One-on-one mentoring
    - Large support groups for vets and families
- [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#)
  - Provides resource links and information for anyone suffering from depression or anxiety
  - Includes articles and links on mental health topics that may be of interest to veterans and their families
  - Helps users understand warning signs and symptoms so they are better able to seek help when needed
  - Provides a directory of therapists and facilities that can help



- [Sidran Institute Help Desk](#)
  - Publishes articles and research relevant to anyone who has experienced a traumatic event in the past
  - Includes information that may be relevant or helpful to the family and loved ones of someone who experienced trauma
  - Includes some support information and a support email; you can email [tripnsu@nova.edu](mailto:tripnsu@nova.edu) for more information and someone will get back to you within a week
    - Note: This is not an emergency support line. If you or your loved one is experiencing an emergency level of anxiety, depression, or other symptomology, call your local provider, 911, or the Veterans Crisis Line (800-273-8255).
    - Another emergency line is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.
- PTSD Coach App
  - Mobile app that is provided in partnership with the VA
  - You can use it to conduct a brief self-assessment to measure your PTSD
  - It includes access to articles and other resources on PTSD that may be of interest to both vets and their families
  - Downloads for the app can be accessed via:
    - Apple products
    - Android devices
    - Desktop computers
- [Veterans Crisis Line](#)
  - Single point of contact for families or vets during crisis
  - Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 to speak to someone
  - You can also text 838255
  - Online chat is also available
  - The lines and chats are run by trained representatives who can connect you with relevant resources and services in your area, depending upon the nature of the crisis

- [Lifeline for Vets](#)
  - Vet-to-vet assistance (veterans helping veterans)
  - Includes hotlines, chats, and text lines all staffed by veterans
  - You can call if you are in crisis but also if you just need to talk to another veteran or find out about support opportunities
  - Call 888-777-4443 or visit the website for chat

## Social Support Groups

- [Vet Friends](#)
  - Online search site that connects veterans
  - Lets you search for the men and women you knew or served with in the past
  - Spouses and family members can also search for vets who were close to their loved ones
  - Site includes veterans, activity duty military members, and ROTC members
  - You must join to be found within the database
  - Currently has around 1.8 million members
  - Basic membership is free
- [Facebook Support Groups](#)
  - Social media offers an easy way to connect with others who are dealing with similar concerns
  - Talk, read about the stories of others, or join online support groups
  - Provide support to other vets or family members
  - Always ensure you understand both the privacy settings and rules of the groups you join
    - Most veterans and family members prefer a closed, private group
    - When you post in a closed, private group, your posts can't be seen by anyone outside of that group
    - As always, share only with those you trust, as information you put online can be copied or shared with others



- Potential Facebook groups for vets and their families include:
  - [PTSD Survivors of America](#)
  - [The Caregiver Space](#)
  - [The Women of Our Vietnam Vets – The Silent Warriors](#)
  - [The Women Behind the Warriors](#)

## Caregiver Support

- [VA Caregiver Support Line](#)
  - This is a support line offered by the VA specifically for the caregivers of veterans
  - Provides assistance to walk you through all the resources available and find out what benefits are right for your loved one
  - An opportunity to talk to someone who understands what you're going through and cares
  - Call 855-260-3274 or visit the link above for more information
- [Military and Veteran Caregiver Network](#)
  - A network for caregivers that lets them connect with each other for support or find a mentor
  - Includes a search for online and local support groups

## Financial and Veteran Benefits Resources

- [Coaching Into Care](#)
  - A VA program that provides guidance for families who are seeking to care for or find benefits for a vet in their life
  - Offers a free 10-30 minute coaching phone call
  - Call 888-823-7458 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. EST on any weekday
- [Veterans Aid and Attendance Pension](#)
  - Helps reduce the cost of assisted living care for eligible veterans
  - Single veteran may qualify for \$1,794 per month in coverage
  - Eligibility requirements include:
    - At least 90 days of active duty service with at least one day during a period of war
    - Meets medical qualifications for living in an assisted living facility
    - Vet has less than \$80,000 in assets



- Application forms and instructions for which office to mail documents to are available on the website linked above

## Other Resources

- [Veterans Resource Centers of America](#)
  - Offers a variety of programs for veterans and their families
  - Works with homeless veterans via rehousing programs
  - Helps veterans find new employment or make career changes
  - Offers some transitional housing services to assist veterans returning from combat zones
  - Maintains a website that includes valuable information on behavioral health treatment, nutrition services and housing
  - Has physical centers located in:
    - California
    - Nevada
    - Arizona
- [NAMI Caregiver Support](#)
  - Provided by the National Alliance on Mental Health
  - Includes a section for veterans and family members on their website
  - Site includes a search for NAMI resources and provides a crisis hotline at 800-950-NAMI
- [National Resource Directory](#)
  - Online database of links to resources for veterans
  - The site is very comprehensive, so the link above is to the instructions for using the site; it's recommended that you start there
  - Some subjects that are included in the site are:
    - VA benefits
    - Employment opportunities and seeking employment as a vet
    - Housing
    - Family support
    - Transportation and travel
    - Assistance for homeless vets



## Appendix 3: Service in Any Branch of the Military Can Ensure Veteran Funeral Benefits

Veterans of all the major U.S. military branches have access to benefits if they are discharged other than dishonorably, and that includes individuals who served in any of the branches described below.

### The Army and Its Reserves

The Army is often one of the first branches that nonservice members think of when they consider the military, along with the Navy and Marines. The Army is the primary branch the United States uses to secure its power on land. This is true in both peace and war times. If the Army is called into an area during a conflict, it will typically be used to secure the area in question and then establish some level of stability and order. Once its mission is achieved, the Army will hand governance of the area over to a suitable local resource or agency. The Army Reserves are aligned with the same mission and purpose as the Army. It's important to note that these are the primary missions of the Army, and that like all other branches of the military, units may attend to other matters at the discretion of military leaders and the President of the United States within boundaries established by the Constitution.

### The Navy and Its Reserves

The Navy takes on the same mission as the Army — the protection of the United States — but it does so primarily on the oceans. In addition to securing U.S. interests on appropriate waters, the Navy and its Reserves work with nations from across the globe to ensure peace on shared waters. To work toward these missions, the Navy may operate on land and air as well as on the sea.

### The Marine Corps and Its Reserves

A third commonly known branch of the U.S. military is the Marine Corps. Like the Navy and Army, it has its own reserves. Marines operate primarily on land and sea. In contrast to the Army, which arrives, secures, and stays, the Marines are more often seen as first responders to combat and other situations. The training and policies of the Marines let units deploy quite rapidly, making them some of the first boots on the ground when need arises. As with other branches of the military, Marine units don't always follow this formula exactly and can take on other types of missions and tasks within military law.

### The Army National Guard

This branch of service operates in each state and is actually required to do so by the Constitution. The majority of forces in the various national guard units don't serve full-time and instead dedicate a preset amount of time (one weekend a month, for example) in the same manner that reservists in the other branches might. The governors of each state or the President of the United States can call the guards into full-time action during

states of emergency or unrest. Common examples of times when the National Guard was called into action include during natural disasters, such as hurricanes or earthquakes, or during extreme civil unrest when regular law enforcement may not be able to keep the peace on its own.

### **The Air Force and Its Reserves**

The Air Force is another commonly listed U.S. military branch. The service members in this branch maintain the nation's space and air defense programs, though not all Air Force members are pilots. Many of them work in technical or ground-to-air tasks, and there are also combat forces, administrative staff, and specialists. While the Air Force doesn't just handle aircraft, it does enforce its mission via satellites, helicopters, jets and planes, and unmanned drones.

### **The Air National Guard**

This is actually not a full branch, but a subset of the Air Force. While the Air Force has its own reserves, the Air National Guard provides even more reserve-style support to the branch.

### **The Coast Guard and Its Reserves**

Although the Coast Guard isn't typically a combat branch, if your loved one served with the Coast Guard, he or she may be eligible for veteran benefits. The Coast Guard patrols the domestic waterways: those are parts of the oceans, gulfs, and lakes that are claimed by the United States and are typically on or around the U.S. land masses. The Coast Guard helps secure the waterways, performs rescues, and helps prevent drug activities on the waterways.

Please note that we have created this resource to be used as a helpful guide for our Veterans and their families. For the most updated, accurate information, please should [contact your local VA](#).