

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery Administration

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

2018 NATIONAL CEMETERIES

Satisfaction Survey

National Report

September 2018

 **VISTRA**

Report Findings

SECTION DESCRIPTION

- This section presents a brief introduction to the National Cemetery Administration's 2018 Survey of Satisfaction and an overview of the contents of this report.
- This section also presents key satisfaction findings from next of kin and funeral directors who have had experiences at national cemeteries.

Report Findings

Introduction

- This report presents findings from the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) 2018 Survey of Satisfaction with National Cemeteries, representing the eighteenth national administration of the survey. The survey has been conducted annually since its inception in 2001. The 2018 survey was sponsored by NCA's Office of Finance and Planning and conducted by Vistra Communications, LLC (Vistra), a communications strategy and professional solutions firm, under contract VA786-16-D-0173.
- Data were collected from next of kin and funeral directors at 126 active national cemeteries from July 31, 2018 to September 7, 2018. Next of kin and funeral director mailing data were extracted from NCA's Burial Operations Support System (BOSS) database of interments.
- The survey was mailed to 52,454 next of kin who had interred a loved one during the time period of February 1, 2017 through January 31, 2018, 6 to 17 months prior to its start. The survey was also mailed to 11,986 funeral directors who had worked with national cemeteries during the designated time period.
- Presented in the following section are key findings from this satisfaction survey. National results in this report represent a roll-up of all survey respondents. Detailed findings are presented in the main body of the report.

Report Findings

Highlights of Findings

Overall Satisfaction Measures

- Overall, 98.2 percent of all respondents (98.3% of next of kin and 97.5% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their experience at the national cemetery.
- 96.9 percent of all respondents (96.8% of next of kin and 97.1% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed the quality of service they received from cemetery staff was excellent.
- 98.0 percent of all respondents (98.2% of next of kin and 97.1% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed that the national cemetery staff was courteous.
- 97.1 percent of all respondents (97.1% of next of kin and 97.7% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed that the national cemetery staff was professional (knowledgeable, helpful, and responsive).
- 99.0 percent of all respondents (99.0% of next of kin and 99.2% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed the overall appearance of their national cemeteries was excellent.
- 98.7 percent of respondents (99.0% of next of kin and 96.7% of funeral directors) indicated they would recommend their national cemeteries to Veteran families during their time of need.

Trust

- Overall, 98.4 percent of all respondents (98.5% of next of kin and 98.0% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed they are willing to rely on VA and the National Cemetery Administration to maintain national cemeteries as national shrines in the future.
- 98.4 percent of all respondents (98.3% of next of kin and 98.7% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed their national cemeteries honor all Veterans and their service to our nation.

Information & Communication

- 96.8 percent of next of kin reported they were very or somewhat satisfied with the information they were provided throughout their experiences with their national cemeteries.
- The three most frequently reported means of finding out about NCA benefits prior to the time of need were: Family member/friend (42.9%), Funeral home (20.2%), and Military discharge-related materials (15.8%).

Report Findings

Highlights of Findings (continued)

- Next of kin selected newsletter/flyer (24.8%), E-mail (21.4%), and VA/NCA website (19.3%) as the three best ways for their national cemeteries to convey information regarding benefits prior to their time of need.
- 95.6 percent of funeral directors who completed the survey reported they were very or somewhat satisfied with the communication between their funeral homes and their national cemeteries. 96.3 percent characterized this communication as excellent or good.
- Funeral directors indicated that VA/NCA Website (41.5%) provides them the most information about national cemetery policies and procedures. Funeral directors noted that E-mail (53.9%) and Letter (20.8%) are the best ways for their national cemeteries to communicate with their funeral homes regarding changes in policies and procedures.

Committal Services

- 95.7 percent of next of kin reported they were very or somewhat satisfied with the committal service at their national cemeteries.
- 77.7 percent of funeral directors reported the process of scheduling interments at their national cemeteries was very or somewhat easy.
- 98.0 percent of funeral directors reported they received the support they needed from cemetery staff always or for the most part.
- 67.6 percent of funeral directors indicated that the service they received from their national cemeteries was superior to or better than the service they received from private cemeteries. An additional 29.8 percent indicated that service was about the same as the service provided by private cemeteries.

Headstones, Markers, and Columbarium Niche Covers

- 94.3 percent of next of kin were very or somewhat satisfied with the length of time it took for the permanent marker, headstone, or columbarium niche cover to be put in place.
- 93.9 percent of next of kin were very or somewhat satisfied with the quality and appearance of the headstone, marker, or columbarium niche cover when it arrived.
- 88.2 percent of next of kin reported that when the headstone, marker, or columbarium niche cover arrived, the inscription was accurate. 3.4 percent reported the inscription was inaccurate, and 8.5 percent reported they did not know.

Report Findings

Highlights of Findings (continued)

Cemetery Appearance and Visitor Accommodations

- 96.8 percent of next of kin agreed or strongly agreed the appearance of their loved one's gravesite was excellent.
- 97.4 percent of all respondents (97.2% of next of kin and 99.1% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed the upkeep of headstones, markers, and columbarium niche covers was excellent.
- 98.3 percent of all respondents (98.2% of next of kin and 98.9% of funeral directors) agreed or strongly agreed the committal shelter used for the service was private, clean, and free of safety hazards.