



VA BURIAL & MEMORIAL BENEFIT PLANNING WITH VETERAN CLIENTS

Will and estate planning professionals play an important role in helping Veterans and their families understand and take full advantage of their earned VA burial and memorial benefits. Use this checklist and conversation guide with your Veteran clients to develop thoughtful estate plans that honor their final wishes and recognize their legacy of service.

Opening the Conversation

“Since you [or your spouse] served in the military, I want to make sure you’re aware of your earned VA burial and memorial benefits, what burial options are available, and how they can fit into your comprehensive estate plan.”

Key Questions to Ask

Military Service Documentation

- » Have you located your DD214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, or other separation documents (or the DD214 of the Veteran)?
- » For National Guard or Reserve Veterans: Do you have copies of orders that show you were mobilized for federal active duty other than for training?
 - NOTE: Documents showing proof of eligibility to receive retirement pay also qualify you for VA burial and memorial benefits.

Cemetery and Burial Preferences

- » Do you have a burial preference (e.g., casketed burial or cremation)?
- » Would you prefer burial at a VA national, local Veterans or private cemetery?
- » Do you and your family have a specific location in mind?
- » Are there religious or cultural considerations to include in your end-of-life plans?

Planning in Advance

- » Have you completed the VA pre-need burial eligibility application for burial in a VA national cemetery? Do you need assistance?
- » Have you considered purchasing the burial plot(s) in advance at a private cemetery? (if applicable)
- » Have you set aside funds for funeral-related costs not covered by VA burial and memorial benefits?
- » Have you considered pre-planning funeral services?

Family Awareness

- » Have you shared your end-of-life wishes with your family?
- » Have you made your family aware of your VA burial and memorial benefits?
- » Who should be responsible for coordinating arrangements at time of need?

End-of-Life Planning Checklist

1. Review VA Burial and Memorial Benefits

[Burial in a VA national cemetery](#) (burial site, burial of a casket or urn or placement of urn in columbarium, opening/closing of gravesite, perpetual care of gravesite)

[Government headstone/marker or medallion](#) for privately-purchased headstone/marker

[United States burial flag](#)

[Presidential Memorial Certificates](#)

[Veterans Legacy Memorial \(VLM\) profile page](#)

[Military funeral honors](#) (provided by the military services)

Potential [burial allowance](#) (if Veteran has service-connected disability or VA pension)

2. Share NCA's Plan Today, Honor Forever Campaign Resources

Burial Benefits at VA National Cemeteries Infosheet

Burial Benefits at VA Grant-Funded Cemeteries Infosheet

Memorial Benefits at Private Cemeteries Infosheet

VA Burial and Memorial Benefits: Frequently Asked Questions Infosheet

Plan with Confidence: Understanding the Costs of Burial Infosheet

VLM's Living Veterans Feature Infosheet

Share NCA's [Veterans and Families web page](#) to explore additional resources

3. Determine Cemetery and Burial Preferences

Preference for casketed burial vs. cremation

Preference for VA national cemetery, VA grant-funded Veterans cemetery, or private cemetery

Identify preferred VA cemetery location(s)

If cremation, discuss in-ground burial, columbarium niche, or scattering garden options

Document religious/cultural considerations

4. Complete Pre-need Planning

Share [Your Guide to Completing VA's Pre-need Burial Eligibility Application](#) for step-by-step instructions on completing the application

Gather information and supporting documents needed to complete the VA pre-need burial eligibility application (e.g., military history, DD214)

Complete the VA pre-need burial eligibility application ([VA Form 40-10007](#))

Optional: Create a Living Veterans profile on the [Veterans Legacy Memorial website](#) (access available once pre-need decision letter received)

Discuss options for pre-planning funeral services

Discuss options for purchasing burial plot(s) in advance at a private cemetery (if applicable)

5. Finalize Will and Estate Documentation with Respect to Burial

Will/trust reflects burial wishes

Funeral expense funding identified

6. Communicate Plans with Family

Identify decision-maker for funeral arrangements

Notify family a profile page for their Veteran loved one will appear on the [Veterans Legacy Memorial website](#) and can be accessed by family members once a VA burial or memorial benefit is applied for

Provide contact information for VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office to ensure family or funeral director knows how to request burial at time of need: 800-535-1117

Store DD214, pre-need decision letter, and other key documents in accessible location and notify next of kin

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration