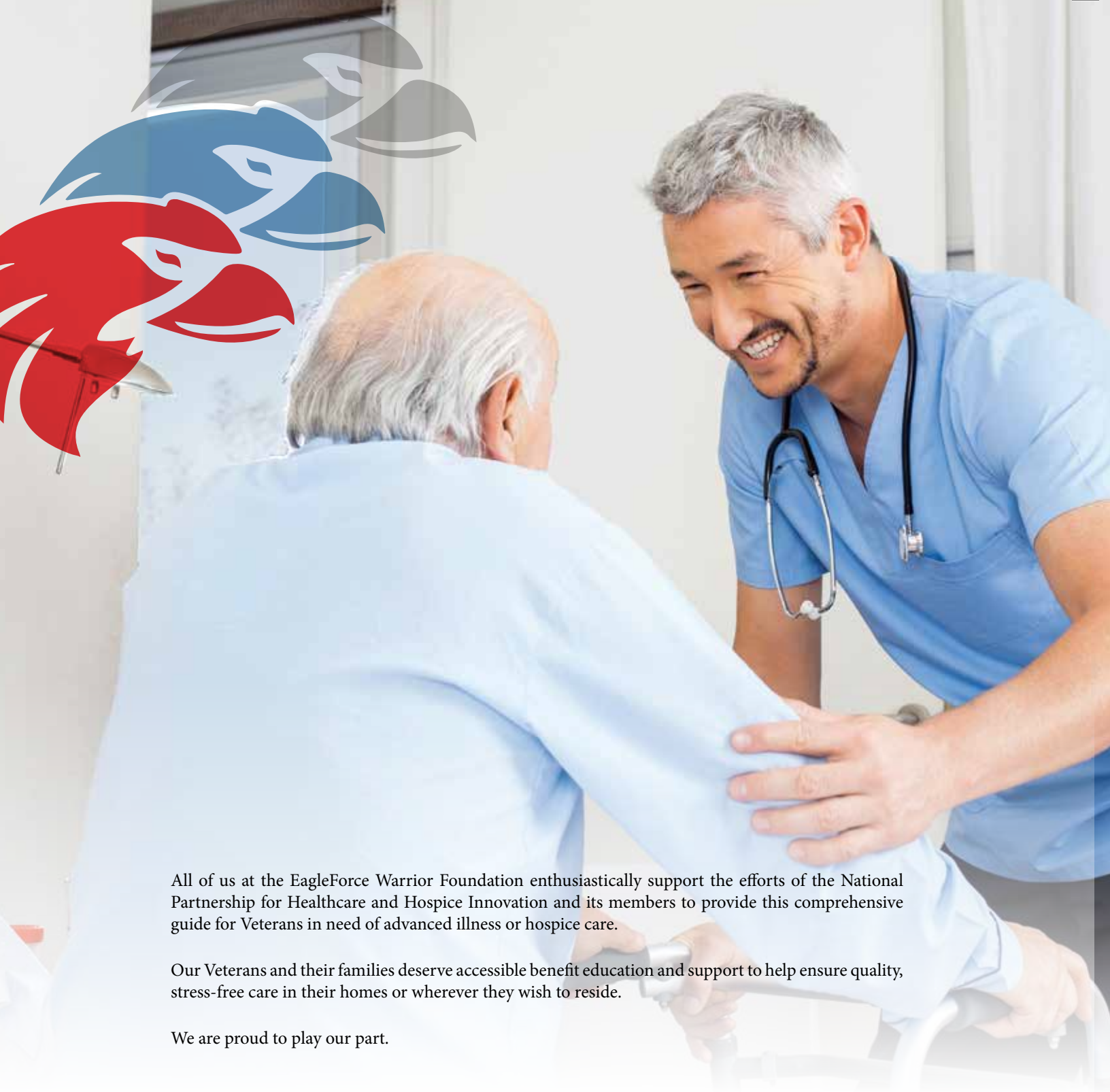


# Veteran Benefits and Resources for Hospice and Palliative Care Patients

A Resource Guide for Veterans, Families and Caregivers





All of us at the EagleForce Warrior Foundation enthusiastically support the efforts of the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation and its members to provide this comprehensive guide for Veterans in need of advanced illness or hospice care.

Our Veterans and their families deserve accessible benefit education and support to help ensure quality, stress-free care in their homes or wherever they wish to reside.

We are proud to play our part.

*Cynthia Dinkins*

Cynthia Dinkins  
Executive Director  
EagleForce Warrior Foundation





## About National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation

The National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation (NPHI) is an organization comprised of 80 not-for-profit hospice organizations, driven by passion and integrity to help people live fully through the end-of-life. Our most important ideas are learned at the bedside, not in the board room. Our members are patient, family and community-focused hospice, palliative care, and advanced illness providers across the country made up of like-minded leaders with expertise and passion for the highest quality, person and family-centered, mission-oriented end-of-life care.

### About Carolina Caring

*Carolina Caring, founded in 1979, is an independent, community-based, nonprofit healthcare provider. It specializes in programs that offer relief from chronic conditions, serious illnesses, and the challenges they bring, including palliative medicine and hospice care for all ages, primary care and grief counseling. Currently, Carolina Caring serves 12 counties across western North Carolina and the Charlotte Region. For more information about Carolina Caring, please call 828.466.0466 or visit [www.CarolinaCaring.org](http://www.CarolinaCaring.org)*



# Introduction

This reference guide was compiled and reviewed by NPHI's Innovation Lab to provide member organizations a tool to assist staff, patients and families in identifying, understanding and acquiring appropriate Veteran benefits through the Veterans Administration.

While U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a wide range of commonly-known benefits and services for its Veterans – like health care, education support through the GI Bill, and home loans – they also provide a bevy of lesser-known benefits that were specifically created to help Veterans and their family members, as well as their survivors. The Veteran must provide proof of discharge from the military under conditions other than dishonorable. Also, many of the programs are dependent upon the Veteran meeting certain financial eligibility requirements.

*The guide also provides resource information for the Veteran and survivor regarding military pay, retirement pay and survivor benefits through the Defense Finance and Accounting Services.*

- After reviewing this guide to determine if you may qualify for any of the listed benefits but are unsure, or find the information confusing, or think the task of applying may be too difficult, let your hospice or palliative care team know as they can either assist you in understanding the process or can direct you to someone that can help you navigate the process.
- **Appendix B of this document contains a military history checklist** you can use to talk to your loved one and document their military service for your family history and provide information that will be useful should you choose to apply for VA benefits.
- **Disclaimer:** NPHI and its member organizations are not responsible for the accuracy of the content in this guide; however, the content was extracted directly from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

## Who is considered a Veteran?

**Active Duty:** Federal Law states that a VETERAN is any person, who served honorably on active duty in the armed forces of the United States. (Discharges marked GENERAL AND UNDER HONORABLE CONDITIONS also qualify.) Title 38 of the U.S. Code states: that there is no minimum time of service required to be considered a “veteran” so long as you served on active duty.

**National Guard and Reserve:** Generally, all Reserve and National Guard members discharged or released under conditions that are not dishonorable are eligible for some VA benefits. The length of your service, service commitment and/or your duty status may determine your eligibility for specific benefits. Eligibility requirements for several VA benefits may include a certain length of active service. Legislation signed in 2016 now states that any Guard and Reserve member that has successfully completed a 20 year commitment – even without any Active Duty time – is considered a Veteran.

**Note:** The above definitions appear relatively simple; however, like most things there are some instances where it may not be simple depending on the individual situation and benefits being considered.

The following links are to official U.S. Government resources that provide more detailed information:

[www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book/benefits\\_chap09.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap09.asp)

Chapter 9 Reserve and National Guard - Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs - Veterans Affairs

[www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-3#3.1](http://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-38/chapter-I/part-3#3.1)  
(Veteran specific definitions)

eCFR :: 38 CFR Part 3 -- Adjudication

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is the official legal print publication containing the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the departments and agencies of the Federal Government. The Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (eCFR) is a continuously updated online version of the CFR. It is not an official legal edition of the CFR.

[www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book/benefits\\_chap09.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap09.asp)

## Chapter 9 Reserve and National Guard - Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs - Veterans Affairs

Training: Participants may pursue training at a college or university or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; state licensure and certification courses; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

For assistance, please consider contacting your local Veterans Administration office, your state's Department of Veteran Services office or an accredited Veteran Service Officer (VSO) at your local chapters of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the American Legion (AL), of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

**Important Note: In order to pursue any of the benefits or assistance detailed in this guide you must possess official discharge document DD214, or equivalent official discharge document.**

If you don't have a copy of your discharge papers, please see [www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/](http://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/). The following website also provides instructions to expedite a replacement DD214 [www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies](http://www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies).

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# I.

## Care Benefits for Veterans and Their Families with Limited Income



### **Veterans' Pension**

This benefit is available to limited-income Veterans who received a discharge from the service under conditions other than dishonorable, and are age 65 and older or are totally disabled, who served at least 90 days of active military service with at least one day of service during a period of war (stateside or overseas). Veterans who entered active duty after September 7, 1980 must have served at least 24 months with at least one day during a wartime period. To be eligible, you must have a yearly family income and net worth below a yearly limit set by Congress, which changes annually. Net worth is the total of yours and your spouses' assets that include annual income but excludes items such as primary residence and personal vehicle. From Dec 1, 2021 to Nov 30, 2022 the net worth limit for Veteran's Pension benefit eligibility is \$138,489. See [www.va.gov/pension/eligibility/](http://www.va.gov/pension/eligibility/) for more information.



### **Aid and Attendance Allowance**

This little-known benefit can help Veterans and their spouses pay towards in-home care, an assisted living facility, or nursing home care. This allowance is in addition to the Veteran's Pension. To qualify, the Veteran must be 65 or older (or permanently disabled), have served during wartime and meet certain medical and financial requirements. Spouses also qualify for this benefit if they are currently married to the Veteran or were married to the Veteran at the time of the Veteran's death. To qualify medically, the Veteran or their spouse would need assistance with basic everyday living tasks like eating, bathing, or dressing. Blindness or residence at a nursing home or assisted living facility also qualifies. To qualify financially, annual income/net worth limit is the same as the Veteran's Pension congressionally set limits. These income limits, along with Aid and Attendance allowance rates, can be found at [www.va.gov/pension/Veterans-pension-rates/](http://www.va.gov/pension/Veterans-pension-rates/). For further information on the Aid and Attendance allowance see [myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Veterans-Affairs-Aid-and-Attendance-\(AandA\)-and-Housebound-Pension-Benefits?serv=126](http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Veterans-Affairs-Aid-and-Attendance-(AandA)-and-Housebound-Pension-Benefits?serv=126)

### **Survivors Pension**

Survivors' Pension is a tax-free, needs-based benefit paid to an un-remarried surviving spouse and/or qualifying dependent children of a deceased wartime Veteran. Ex-spouses are not authorized this benefit. You must have a yearly family income/net worth below the yearly limit set by Congress to be eligible for Survivor's Pension benefits. This annual income and net worth limit is the same as the Veteran's Pension congressionally set limits (\$138,489 through Nov 30, 2022). See [www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension-rates/](http://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension-rates/) for further details. You may be eligible if you are the surviving spouse or dependent child of a Veteran who received a discharge from service under conditions other than dishonorable, had a service-connected disability, or served at least 90 days of active military service with at least one day during a wartime period prior to September 7, 1980. Veterans who entered active duty after September 7, 1980 must have served at least 24 months with at least one day during a wartime period. Dependent children may be eligible for Survivors' Pension if they are younger than 18 (or between ages 18 and 23 if attending school) or permanently incapable of self-support due to a disability incurred before age 18 and are not married. See [www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension/](http://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension/) for more information.



## II.

# Care Benefits for Veterans and Their Families for all Income Levels

Disability Benefits for Presumptively  
Associated Diseases and Conditions

### What is “Presumptive” Service Connection?

VA assumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service. This is because of the unique circumstances of a specific Veteran’s military service. If a presumed condition is diagnosed in a Veteran from a specific group experience, he or she may be awarded disability compensation. **For a list of specific presumed conditions, please see Appendix A.**

### Veterans in the following groups may qualify for presumptive disability benefits:

- Former prisoners of war who have a condition that is at least 10% disabling
- Vietnam Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange or served in the Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975
- Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation who experienced one of the following:
  - Participated in atmospheric nuclear testing
  - Occupied or were prisoners of war in Hiroshima or Nagasaki
  - Served before February 1, 1992 at a diffusion plant in Paducah, Kentucky; Portsmouth, Ohio; or Oak Ridge Tennessee
  - Served before January 1, 1974 at Amchitka Island, Alaska
- Gulf War Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations and have a condition that is at least 10% disabling by December 31, 2026



**Patients in Hospice, or their representative with a Power of Attorney (POA), can expedite registration for Presumptive Disability benefits by:**

- Gathering the appropriate documentation (DD 214 discharge paper), official diagnosis with a doctor's authentication, and a hardship letter. Proof of hospice admission satisfies the hardship requirement.
- Calling the National VA Benefits office at 1-800-827-1000 and explaining your situation.
- Faxing requested/required documents to fax number provided by the representative.

**Survivor and Dependent Compensation (DIC)**

If you're the surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member who meets one of the criteria listed below, you may be able to get a tax-free monetary benefit paid monthly called the VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC). Find out more at [www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/](http://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/).

- Died in the line of duty
- Died from a service-related injury or illness (see the above section and Appendix A for presumptively associated diseases and conditions)
- Did not die from a service-related injury or illness but was eligible to receive VA compensation for a service-connected disability rated as totally disabling (meaning the disability made it impossible for the service member to work) for a certain period of time

**Note:** If you were denied a Blue Water Navy Veteran's service-connected disability claim in the past, you may be eligible for DIC benefits based on the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. As a result of this recent law, Veterans who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are now entitled to a presumption of service connection for illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure.

**Eligibility**

To determine eligibility for VA DIC as a surviving spouse, child or parent, see eligibility requirements listed on the VA website at [www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/](http://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation/).

**How do I apply for compensation?**

- If you are the surviving spouse or child of a Veteran, fill out an Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits, VA Form 21P-534EZ, found at [www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21P-534EZ-ARE.pdf](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21P-534EZ-ARE.pdf)
- If you're a surviving parent, fill out an Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by Parent(s), VA Form 21P-535, found at [www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21P-534EZ-ARE.pdf](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21P-534EZ-ARE.pdf)

**Homemaker/Home Health Aid Program (H/HH)**

H/HH services enable the Veteran to remain at home with a higher quality of life. These services provide assistance with Activities of Daily Living, which includes bathing, dressing, feeding, ambulation, transfers, and exercises; and assistance with Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, which may include light housekeeping, laundry, meal preparation, and grocery shopping. This program is also for Veterans who are isolated, or their caregivers are experiencing a burden. HHA services do not include authorization of payment for skilled home health services or adult sitter services. H/HH services are provided by licensed and accredited private agencies. **H/HH is available to all Veterans if they are enrolled in the VA standard health medical benefits program and they meet the clinical need for services.** To contact the program, call your local VA and ask for a Homemaker/Home Health Aid Program representative. For more information see [www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/pages/Homemaker\\_and\\_Home\\_Health\\_Aide\\_Care.asp](http://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/pages/Homemaker_and_Home_Health_Aide_Care.asp).

## Hospice Benefit

Hospice is a covered benefit for all medically enrolled Veterans. National Hospice policy and standards for VA medical centers include: provision of hospice services in all settings; inpatient hospice beds or access to them in the local community; referral assistance to area community hospices; and an interdisciplinary palliative care consult team. Veterans with Medicare, Medicaid, or other forms of health insurance can use the VA benefit in addition to a private/community hospice. You should discuss this option with your hospice social worker regarding whether there is an advantage to using dual services.

## Veteran's Care Centers

Charles George VA Medical Center  
1100 Tunnel Rd.  
Asheville, NC 28805  
828-298-7911

W.G. Bill Hefner VA Medical Center  
1601 Brenner Ave.  
Salisbury, NC 28144  
704-638-9000

Durham VA Medical Center  
508 Fulton Street  
Durham, NC 27705  
919-286-0411

Fayetteville Coastal VA Medical Center  
2300 Ramsey Street  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
910-488-2120

## VA Caregiver Support Program

The Caregiver Program offers a number of services to eligible Veterans and caregivers. One such program is the General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) that provides peer support mentoring, skills training, coaching, telephone support, online programs, and referrals to available resources to caregivers of Veterans. The Veteran must be enrolled in Veterans Affairs (VA) health care and be receiving care from a caregiver in order for the caregiver to participate. Caregivers who participate in PGCSS are called General Caregivers. General Caregivers do not need to be a relative or live with the Veteran.

Also available is the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). PCAFC is for eligible Veterans who have incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975 or on or after September 11, 2001. This program provides resources, education, support, a financial stipend, and health insurance (if eligible), beneficiary travel (if eligible), to caregivers of eligible Veterans.

To identify your specific Caregiver Program Coordinator please use the following link:  
[www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New\\_CSC\\_Page.asp](http://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp)





# III.

## Veteran's Burial Benefits

### **Burial Benefits**

Regardless of income and assets, these benefits provide eligible Veterans, spouses and qualified dependents (minor children and, in some cases, unmarried adult dependent children) a free burial at a national or state cemetery, free grave marker, and burial with military honors, which includes presentation of an American flag and playing of taps at funerals/memorials. The VA created Planning Your Legacy: VA Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit to assist Veterans and their family members in pre-need planning. See [www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Planning\\_Legacy\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Planning_Legacy_Booklet.pdf)

### **Burial and Grave Marker Provided at No Cost**

#### ***National and State Cemeteries:***

Regardless of income and assets, the U.S. Department of VA provides all honorably discharged Veterans, spouses, and qualified dependents a free burial and grave marker in any of 142 national cemeteries.

- VA national cemeteries located in North Carolina:  
**Salisbury National Cemetery**  
501 Statesville Blvd. Salisbury, NC 28144  
**Raleigh National Cemetery**  
501 Rock Quarry Rd. Raleigh, NC 27610  
**New Bern National Cemetery**  
1711 National Ave. New Bern, NC 28560
- Arlington National Cemetery: This cemetery is run by the U.S. Army. Veterans who won top awards, died on duty, retired from service, and others who qualify are buried here. See [www.arlingtoncemetery.mil](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil) for further information. Arlington is administered by the Department of the Army.
- State Veterans cemeteries:  
**Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery**  
962 Old US 70 Hwy Black Mountain, NC 28711  
**Coastal Carolina Veterans Cemetery**  
110 Montford Point Rd. Jacksonville, NC 28541  
**Sandhills State Veterans Cemetery**  
8220 Bragg Blvd. Ft. Bragg, NC 28310  
**Eastern Carolina Veterans Cemetery**  
164 Longs Plant Farm Goldsboro, NC 27544

Veterans and families can apply for pre-approval for national and state VA cemetery admission. Other U.S. military service members and civilians may be eligible for these benefits. For eligibility requirements see [www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/](http://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/). Unfortunately, funeral or cremation costs are not covered.

### ***Burial at Sea***

Burial at Sea is a means of final disposition of remains that is performed on United States Navy vessels. The committal ceremony is performed while the ship is deployed. Therefore, family members are not allowed to be present. The commanding officer of the ship assigned to perform the ceremony will notify the family of the date, time, and longitude and latitude once the committal service has been completed. The average amount of wait time for burial at sea, is **12 to 18 months**, once the remains/cremains are received at the port of embarkation. Individuals eligible for this program are:

- Active duty members of the uniformed services
- Retirees and Veterans who were honorably discharged
- U.S. civilian marine personnel of the Military Sealift Command
- Dependent family members of active duty personnel, retirees, and Veterans

### ***Grave Markers and Medallions***

The VA provides a headstone, columbarium niche cover, or a flat marker for a Veteran's final resting place, whether it is a private or a state/national cemetery, for qualifying Veterans. If a private grave marker is purchased, a medallion for placement on the grave marker can be obtained from the VA. The funeral home can arrange to obtain the grave marker or medallion, or the grave marker and medallion can be requested directly from the VA. See [www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/](http://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/) for Veteran eligibility requirements and more information.

### ***Funeral Allowance and Private Cemetery Burial Allowance***

Some Veterans may qualify for a \$300 funeral allowance as well as \$796 for a plot if they choose to be buried in a private cemetery. This allowance is limited to individuals who died as a result of a service-connected disability, died while in VA care, or died while receiving a VA pension or military retirement. See [www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/](http://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance/) for a full description of allowance qualifications.

See [www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Support-Services/Casualty/Mortuary-Services/Burial-at-Sea/](http://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Support-Services/Casualty/Mortuary-Services/Burial-at-Sea/) for further information on this program, or call the U.S. Navy Mortuary Affairs office at 866-787-0081.

*“To care for him who shall  
have borne the battle and for  
his widow and his orphan”*

*- Abraham Lincoln*

## Military Honors

The following military honors are provided to all qualified Veterans:

- The Department of Defense, through the “Honoring Those Who Have Served” program, provides funeral service Honor Teams to include the folding and presentation of the United States burial flag and playing of taps. These are generally scheduled for the Veteran by the funeral home on behalf of the Veteran’s family. If the burial is at a VA cemetery, funeral honors can be requested from the VA using VA Form 10-2065.
- One United States Flag is provided through the national VA to drape the casket or accompany the urn; this generally is obtained by the funeral home for the funeral service but can be obtained directly through the VA with a VA Form 27-2008 and copy of the DD214.
- The national VA can provide a Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) to the family of a deceased Veteran. A PMC is an engraved paper certificate signed by the current President. As with other honors, this can be arranged for by the funeral home on behalf of the Veteran’s family, or directly through the VA with a VA Form 40-0247 and a copy of the DD214.

## What information do I need to apply for burial benefits?

- Social Security number
- Date and place of birth
- Military status and service history (like service dates, discharge character, and rank—commonly found on the DD214 or other separation documents)
- Discharge papers (DD214 or other separation documents)  
**Note:** If you don’t have a copy of discharge papers, see [www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/](http://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/). The following website also provides instructions to expedite a replacement DD214 [www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies](http://www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies). Your Carolina Caring team may be able to help with this.
- If the Veteran has already passed away, and you are making immediate burial arrangements and do not have a copy of discharge papers, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117. They can help you get your loved one’s DD214 or other discharge documents you may need.





# IV.

## Arrears of Pay and Survivor Benefit Plan Annuity for Spouses/Families of Retired Military Members

If your loved one retired from the military and receives retirement pay, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) is who you will work with to stop retiree pay and start your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity payments as well as obtaining any other compensation owed from retirement services. The DFAS website at [www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/](http://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/) has a tab on its homepage to report a retiree's death, or you can call the DFAS customer care center at 800-321-1080. Upon notification, DFAS will stop monthly retirement payments to prevent overpayment.

After reporting the death to DFAS, you should receive a letter containing the following documents:

- SF1174 Claim for Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Member of the Uniformed Service and instructions
- Annuity account forms DD2656-7 and instructions if the deceased retiree was enrolled in the SBP

### What is Arrears of Pay?

Arrears of Pay is a one-time payment made to a beneficiary that includes the pro-rated amount of the deceased retiree's final month's pay and any other money owned you at the time of the retiree's passing. Please see the *How to Claim a Retiree's Arrears of Pay Using the SF1174* fact sheet located at [www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/1174RetireeAOP/](http://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/1174RetireeAOP/) for more detailed information.

### Filing for Arrears of Pay

The completed SF1174 form and death certificate are required to receive the Arrears of Pay (a direct deposit form is optional). Where to send the SF1174 form and supporting documents? You have three options:

1. Upload a PDF of your completed/signed SF1174 and supporting documents via the AskDFAS online upload tool specifically for the SF1174 on DFAS.mil at <https://corpweb1.dfas.mil/askDFAS/ticketInput.action?subCategoryID=19124>
2. OR, you can fax your forms to: 800-469-6559
3. OR, you can mail your forms to:  
Defense Finance and Accounting Service  
U.S. Military Retired Pay  
8899 E 56th Street  
Indianapolis IN 46249-1200

## Survivor's Benefit Plan

If you are the designated beneficiary of a deceased military service member's SBP, there are several documents you will need to fill out to start your SBP payments.

- The DD Form 2656-7 is the Verification of Survivor Annuity form, which, once received by DFAS, starts SBP payments. It can be found at [www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd2656-7.pdf](http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd2656-7.pdf)
- The IRS W-4P is the Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity form to have federal taxes withheld from the annuity, found at [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf)
- Direct Deposit forms: either the Fast Start Direct Deposit Form (FMS 2231), OR Direct Deposit Enrollment Form (SF 1199A), OR International Direct Deposit Enrollment Form (SF1199-I).

Please see the *Start a Survivor Benefit Plan Annuity* fact sheet located at [www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/ApplySBP/](http://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/survivors/ApplySBP/) for more detailed information.

## Filing for SBP

You have three options for submitting your SBP documents:

1. Upload a PDF of your completed/signed DD and supporting documents via the AskDFAS online upload tool specifically for the DD Form 2656-7 on DFAS. mil at <https://corpweb1.dfas.mil/askDFAS/ticketInput.action?subCategoryID=19125>
2. OR, you can fax your forms to: 800-982-8459
3. OR, you can mail your forms to:  
U.S. Military Annuitant Pay  
8899 E 56th Street  
Indianapolis IN 46249-1300



If you have questions about starting your SBP annuity, please contact your Branch of Service Retiree Service Organization or call the Customer Care Center at 800-321-1080.



# V.

## Filing Claims

### **Proof of Military Service**

For benefits application, a copy of discharge papers (form DD214, or other separation documents) and military status and service history (like service dates, discharge character, and rank—commonly found on the DD214 or other separation documents), are required. If you do not have a copy of yours or your spouses'/parents' DD214/discharge papers, see [www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/](http://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records/) to obtain a copy. The following website also provides instructions to expedite a replacement DD214 [www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies](http://www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/emergencies). Your hospice team may be able to help with this.

### **If You Need Assistance in Filing Claims with the VA**

There are a lot of benefits for Veterans, and figuring out which forms are required for a VA claim, how to fill them out, and where to send them can be confusing; however, there are agencies ready to assist you. Your hospice team can help connect you to information and agencies that can assist. If you feel you cannot complete the application process on your own, you can appoint an accredited representative to act on your behalf in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for VA benefits (38 U.S.C. 5902, 5903, and 5904).



## Accredited Representative

An Accredited Representative is an individual who has undergone a formal application and training process, and is recognized by VA as being capable of assisting claimants with their affairs before VA. Most accredited representatives work for Veteran service organizations (VSOs) such as the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), or the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Accredited representatives may also work for state or county government entities, or may be lawyers or individuals called claims agents, who have completed a certification process with the VA. Recognized organizations and individuals, whether congressionally chartered VSOs, Veteran Service Officers, or VA accredited attorneys or claims agents, can legally represent a Veteran, service member, dependent, or survivor before the VA. Non-recognized organizations and individuals can provide information but cannot be a representative. Further information on types of claims agents is listed as follows:

- **Veterans Service Organizations (VSO):** Most accredited representatives work for VSOs, which are private non-profit groups that advocate on behalf of Veterans and their families. Most VSOs provide their services free of charge, but they may request reimbursement for unusual expenses or ask that you join the organization. VA-recognized VSOs can be named as legal agent for a Veteran or the Veteran's family. Your VSO can help you gather any evidence needed and submit a fully developed claim on your behalf. In addition to assisting Veterans and their families with VA claims, VSOs also sponsor a range of Veteran-centric services such as providing transportation to and from VA medical center appointments. **See Appendix C of this document for a list of local accredited VSOs in your service area.**
- **Veteran Service Officers:** Veteran service officers are agents who work for the state. They are trained to help Veterans file claims. Their services are free. **A list of local officers can be found in Appendix C of this Guide.**
- **Attorneys and Claims Agents:** Attorneys and claims agents must be VA approved to legally represent and file claims for Veterans or their families. They must pass a test and take classes every 1-2 years to keep their license. Unlike VSOs, claims agents and attorneys typically charge a fee for their services. Refer to [www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/vso-search) to find a VA approved attorney or claims agent.

If you are seeking representation from a VSO, you can download a blank copy of the 21-22 form at [www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22-ARE.pdf](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22-ARE.pdf) (*Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant's Representative*). Fill out and mail or hand deliver it to the VSO that you selected. If the VSO agrees to assist you with your claim, that organization will then submit it to the VA regional office on your behalf.

If you are seeking representation from an attorney or claim's agent, you can download a blank copy of the 21-22a form at [www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22A-ARE.pdf](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22A-ARE.pdf). Fill out a copy of the VA Form 21-22a and mail or hand deliver it to the attorney or claims agent that you selected. That individual will then submit the form to the VA regional office on your behalf.



# APPENDIX A:

## Diseases and/ or Conditions Presumptively Qualifying for Disability Benefits

### What is “Presumptive” Service Connection?

VA presumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service. This is because of the unique circumstances of a specific Veteran’s military service. If a presumed condition is diagnosed in a Veteran in a certain group, they can be awarded disability compensation.

### What are “Presumptive” Conditions?

If you are diagnosed with a chronic disease within one year of active duty release, you should apply for disability compensation. Examples of chronic disease include: arthritis, diabetes or hypertension.

Or, if you served continuously for at least 90 days and are diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) after discharge, you can establish service connection for the disease.

Veterans in the following groups may qualify for “presumptive” disability benefits:

- Former prisoners of war who have a condition that is at least 10 percent disabling
- Vietnam Veterans who were:
  - Exposed to Agent Orange
  - Served in the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975
- Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation and who experienced one of the following:
  - Participated in atmospheric nuclear testing
  - Occupied or were prisoners of war in Hiroshima or Nagasaki
  - Served before Jan. 1, 1974, at Amchitka Island, Alaska
  - Served before Feb. 1, 1992, at a diffusion plant in Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio or Oak Ridge, Tennessee
- Gulf War Veterans who:
  - Served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations
  - Have a condition that is at least 10 percent disabling by Dec. 31, 2026



See the table below for specific presumed conditions for these groups:

Former Prisoners of War	Vietnam Veterans	Atomic Veterans	Gulf War Veterans
<p>Imprisoned for any length of time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychosis</li> <li>Any anxiety state</li> <li>Dysthymic disorder</li> <li>Organic residuals of frostbite</li> <li>Post-traumatic osteoarthritis</li> <li>Heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease</li> <li>Stroke and the residual effects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AL amyloidosis</li> <li>B-cell leukemia</li> <li>Chronic lymphocytic leukemia</li> <li>Type 2 diabetes</li> <li>Hodgkin's disease</li> <li>Ischemic heart disease</li> <li>Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma</li> <li>Parkinson's disease</li> <li>Prostate cancer</li> <li>Respiratory cancers</li> <li>Soft-tissue sarcoma (not including osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma)</li> <li>Bladder Cancer</li> <li>Hypothyroidism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All forms of leukemia, except chronic lymphocytic leukemia</li> <li>Cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract, brain, bone, lung, colon or ovary</li> <li>Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma</li> <li>Multiple myeloma</li> <li>Lymphomas, other than Hodgkin's disease</li> <li>Primary liver cancer, except if there are indications of cirrhosis or hepatitis B</li> </ul>	<p>Medically-unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses that exist for six months or more, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chronic fatigue syndrome</li> <li>Fibromyalgia</li> <li>Irritable bowel syndrome</li> <li>Any diagnosed or undiagnosed illness that warrants a presumption of service connection, as determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs</li> </ul> <p>Signs or symptoms of an undiagnosed illness include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fatigue</li> <li>Skin symptoms</li> <li>Headaches</li> <li>Muscle pain</li> <li>Joint pain</li> <li>Neurological symptoms</li> <li>Sleep disturbance</li> <li>GI symptoms</li> <li>Cardiovascular symptoms</li> <li>Weight loss</li> <li>Menstrual disorders</li> </ul>
<p>Imprisoned-for-at- least 30 days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beriberi</li> <li>Chronic dysentery</li> <li>Helminthiasis</li> <li>Malnutrition (including optic atrophy)</li> <li>Pellagra</li> <li>Other nutrition deficiencies</li> <li>Irritable bowel syndrome</li> <li>Peptic ulcer</li> <li>Peripheral neuropathy</li> <li>Liver cirrhosis</li> <li>Avitaminosis</li> <li>Osteoporosis</li> </ul>	<p>The following conditions, if they become greater than 10 percent debilitating within a year of exposure to an herbicide agent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy</li> <li>Chloracne or other similar acneform disease</li> <li>Porphyria cutanea tarda</li> </ul>		



# APPENDIX B:

## Military History Checklist

### General Information

Full name (last, first, middle):

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.....

.....

Did the vet serve under a maiden name or other name (alias)?  
If Yes, list the other name(s) here:

.....

.....

Do you have a copy of Veteran's DD214 discharge papers?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the Veteran have any immediate family members that served or are serving in the military?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, please list here: .....

.....

.....

.....

Would you like to talk with someone about VA benefits you or your family might be eligible to receive?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please notify your Hospice Team. Is there a specific benefit where more information/help is desired?

## Military Background

In which branch of the military did the Veteran serve?

- ☐ Army
- ☐ Navy
- ☐ Air Force
- ☐ Marines
- ☐ Coast Guard
- ☐ Reservist or National Guard member
- ☐ Merchant Marines during WWII
- ☐ Other .....

What are the Veteran's dates of service (date entered and date left service):

.....

.....

What is the highest rank the Veteran attained:

.....

.....

In which war era or period of service did the Veteran serve?

- ☐ WWII (12/7/41 to 12/31/46)
- ☐ Korea (6/27/50 to 1/31/55)
- ☐ Cold War
- ☐ Vietnam (8/5/64 to 5/7/75 and 2/28/61 for Veterans who served "in country" (in Vietnam)

Did you actually serve In-Country?

.....

☐ Gulf War (8/2/90 through a date to be set by law or presidential proclamation)

☐ Peace Time

☐ Afghanistan/Iraq (OEF/OIF)

Other: .....

.....

Did the Veteran serve on active duty?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the Veteran's service include combat, dangerous or traumatic assignments?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: .....

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Was the Veteran a prisoner of war?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: .....

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What was the Veteran's job in the service (e.g. engineering, infantry, communications, maintenance, construction, medical field, other)?

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What military bases and/or places did the Veteran serve?

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.....

List any specific missions, operations or projects that the Veteran served in:

.....  
.....

Did the Veteran earn a military award? If yes, mark the award(s) below:

- ☐ Medal of honor
- ☐ Distinguished Service Cross
- ☐ Navy Cross
- ☐ Air Force Cross
- ☐ Silver Star
- ☐ Purple Heart
- ☐ Bronze Star *(note if the Bronze Star include "V" device for valour)*

List other awards here:.....  
.....  
.....

Overall, how does the Veteran view their experience in the military?

.....  
.....

Do any memories particularly stand out?

.....  
.....

## VA Benefits Information

Is the Veteran enrolled in VA?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the Veteran receive any VA benefits?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which benefits?

.....  
.....

Does the Veteran have a service-connected condition (see Appendix A for a list of presumptive service-connected conditions)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is the condition?

.....  
.....

Does the Veteran get his/her medications from the VA?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the Veteran go to a VA hospital or clinic for services? If so, what is the hospital and/or clinic's name?

.....  
.....

What is the name and contact information of the Veteran's VA physician or Primary Care Provider?

.....  
.....

# APPENDIX C:

## Additional Resources for Veterans and Caregivers

**General:** A good place to learn about all types of Veterans' benefits is at the online at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) or [www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov) or, contact your regional Department of Veterans Services office or local Veterans' service organization where you can get personalized help and assistance in filing claims.

### Department of Veterans Services

Regional Services Offices in the Carolina Caring Support Area:

#### VA Regional Office

Winston Salem Regional Office  
251 N Main Street  
Winston Salem, NC 27155  
1-800-827-1000

Veteran and Family Support:

#### Veteran Services of the Carolinas

24 Cumberland Ave.  
Asheville, NC 28801  
855-962-8387

### Veteran Services Organizations

#### Alexander County Veterans Services

621 Liledoun Rd. Suite 8  
Taylorsville, NC 28557  
828-632-5411

#### Burke County Veterans Services

501 N Green Street  
Morganton, NC 28655  
828-439-4376

#### Caldwell County Veterans Services

905 West Ave NW  
Lenoir, NC 28645  
828-757-1345

#### Cabarrus County Veterans Services

363 Church St. N Suite 180  
Concord, NC 28025  
704-920-2869

#### Catawba County Veterans Services

100 Government Drive  
Newton, NC 28658  
828-465-8255

#### Cleveland County Veterans Services

311 E Marion Street  
Shelby, NC 28150  
704-484-4803

#### Gaston County Veterans Services

965 Roberts Drive  
Gaston, NC 28054  
704-866-3606

#### Iredell County Veterans Services

200 S Center Street  
Statesville, NC 28677  
704-878-3135

#### Lincoln County Veterans Services

206 Gamble Drive Suite A  
Lincolnton, NC 28092  
704-736-8506

#### McDowell County Veterans Services

100 Spaulding Road  
Marion, NC 28752  
828-659-0833

#### Mecklenburg County Veterans Services

3205 Freedom Drive Suite 2000  
Charlotte, NC 28208  
704-336-2102

#### Rowan County Veterans Services

1935 Jake Alexander Blvd W Suite A-2  
Salisbury, NC 28147  
704-216-8138

1. Veteran Crisis Line: 800-273-8255
2. VA benefits helpline: 800-827-1000
3. General VA Benefits  
[www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets.asp)
4. Requesting DD-214  
[www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/](http://www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/)
5. Military Personnel Records Request  
[www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html](http://www.archives.gov/Veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html)
6. Health Benefits/Means Test/Income Threshold  
[www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost/financial\\_assessment.asp](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost/financial_assessment.asp)
7. Application for VA Health Benefits  
[www.1010ez.med.va.gov/](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/)





## Checklist To Prepare for Death of a Veteran

- ☐ Locate DD-214 (military discharge papers) and store in a place where it can be easily found. This is needed for funeral arrangements, military honors, and VA benefits. If you don't have or can't find, you can order a copy at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).
- ☐ Prepare a list of computer passwords, bank account information, mutual accounts, and any other accounts in Veterans name. Have contact information listed.
- ☐ Other important items to have accessible include birth certificates, Social Security Cards, Marriage/ Divorce Certificates, Death Certificates, health insurance cards, life insurance information, Wills, Living Wills, and other documents you feel are important.
- ☐ If funeral arrangements and burial plan have not been pre-planned, indicate your funeral home preference and details regarding your funeral service. Include preference of burial or cremation and which cemetery you would like to use, local or VA cemetery.
- ☐ Talk to Veteran to ensure their wishes are documented and confirm where all the above referenced items are located.



### **What to do when you lose a Veteran loved one:**

- ☐ For military honors, provide DD-214 to funeral home of your choice for arrangements to be made. Notify VA or local Veterans Service office of death. Benefits may need to adjust to prevent overpayment. Receive guidance on survivor benefits and life insurance, if applicable.
- ☐ Contact the Social Security Administration to schedule an appointment via phone or in person to go over your entitlement.
- ☐ If veteran had private life insurance, contact the Life Insurance Company and provide a copy of the death certificate. Death certificate can be obtained from the funeral home or County Register of Deeds within 2-4 weeks.
- ☐ If you have an attorney, contact them to make the planning of the estate easier for you.
- ☐ Contact joint accounts, or accounts in Veteran name only, to notify of death. This includes pensions, retirement, investments, and credit cards. Have account numbers accessible and a copy of the death certificate is required.
- ☐ Contact homeowner's insurance, DMV if Veteran's name is attached to vehicle(s), and city/county for property taxes.

# Important Notes

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# Important Notes

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