

— FWD ASSIST HQ —

FIELD GUIDE

The Burial and Military Honors Guide

Ask for the honors, flag, marker, and burial
benefits a veteran earned.



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A FWD Assist HQ Field Guide

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This guide is education, not representation. It explains how part of the VA system works so you can handle your own business with confidence. It is not legal or claims advice, and reading it does not create any representative relationship between you and the author. The author is not affiliated with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and nothing here is endorsed by the VA.

This guide prints no live VA dollar figures and no rating percentages on purpose, because they change. Before you make a decision based on any number, check the current figure at va.gov. No book can promise you a rating; the evidence in your file decides the result. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Officer is always free.

The Burial and Military Honors Guide

Ask for the honors, flag, marker, and burial benefits a veteran earned.

Companion to *What to Do When a Veteran Dies*.

BEFORE YOU READ ONE MORE LINE

If you or someone in your family is in crisis, stop and call the **Veterans Crisis Line: dial 988, then press 1**. You can also text 838255. It's free, confidential, and open 24 hours a day. You don't have to be a veteran to call. It serves families and friends too.

This is general education, not legal or claims advice, and not guidance for your specific claim. It cannot promise you a rating or an outcome, and no one can. For help with your own claim, see a free accredited representative (see [the back of this guide](#)). Nothing here creates a representative relationship.

Current as of October 2026. Rules, forms, and figures change. Check current details at va.gov.

THE BEST WAY TO USE THIS GUIDE

The strongest position is to be your own informed advocate and to work with a free accredited representative. An accredited Veterans Service Organization, such as the DAV, VFW, American Legion, or a county or state veterans office, helps at no charge. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can help too. They can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim, and after that they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. This guide is here so you understand your own situation and can work with them as a full partner instead of handing it over blind. If you'd rather handle this yourself, and you're comfortable doing that, the guide walks you through every step. Either way, you stay in control.

The Outcome and What You Need Before You Start

The outcome: By the end of this guide you'll have asked for military funeral honors and a burial flag before the service. You'll have chosen a cemetery with the facts in hand and requested the headstone, marker, or medallion and the Presidential Memorial Certificate. And you'll have filed or confirmed any VA burial allowance before its deadline.

This guide prepares you for the task. It doesn't and can't promise an outcome. The facts in the file decide the result.

WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ The veteran's DD214 or other discharge papers, or a request for a copy already in.
- ☐ A certified copy of the death certificate.
- ☐ The name and phone number of the funeral director.
- ☐ The veteran's Social Security number or VA file number.
- ☐ Every funeral, burial, and transportation bill and receipt, itemized and showing who paid.
- ☐ One folder to hold all of it.

When to start: Before the service, if you can. This sits in the first 72 hours to the first two weeks. Honors and the flag have to be asked for before the funeral. The burial money can wait for a calmer week, but some of it has a deadline.

Start Here: The Basics

Two agencies are involved. The Department of Defense provides military funeral honors. VA provides the burial flag, the headstone, marker, or medallion, the Presidential Memorial Certificate, burial in a VA national cemetery, and burial allowances that help pay some costs. For an eligible veteran, VA provides the honors-related items at no cost. Burial includes cremation, burial at sea, and donation to a medical school.

One question keeps this straight at the funeral home. Ask it in plain words: "Which of these does VA or the military provide at no cost, and which are your charges?" A good funeral director answers it plainly. The Veterans Crisis Line serves families too: dial 988, then press 1, or text 838255.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.1700; 10 U.S.C. § 1491.

The Steps

STEP 1

Find the DD214, or request a copy today.

Nearly everything in this guide leans on proof of service. Check the safe, the file drawer, the lockbox, and the box of important papers.

If you can't find it, **then** request it from the National Archives at archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records. Next of kin can ask, with proof of death. Use the burials and emergency request option if the funeral is close. Copies are generally free if he left the service less than 62 years ago. Older records are archival and carry a fee.

Do not pay a company to "research" the DD214. The National Archives says it provides the copy free in most cases.

Done when the DD214 is in your folder, or a dated request is in.

STEP 2

Ask for military funeral honors before the service.

Tell the funeral director you want military funeral honors and ask who will request them. By law, the detail has at least two members of the armed forces. At a minimum they fold and present the flag to the family and play Taps. If no bugler comes, they play a recorded version. VA suggests contacting the service branch at least 48 to 72 hours before the service. Staff at a VA national cemetery can help arrange honors there.

Do not pay for honors or buy a "package" to get them. VA's April 2026 scam warning covers this. If a funeral home asks you to pay for funeral honors or to schedule a national cemetery burial, you can file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at reportfraud.ftc.gov.

Where this is written down: 10 U.S.C. § 1491(a) through (c); VA News, "Scams targeting surviving family members," April 23, 2026.

Done when the funeral director has confirmed who requested the honors and when.

STEP 3

Ask for the burial flag.

VA provides a United States flag to drape the casket or go with the urn. It's requested on VA Form 27-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes. The funeral director usually files it. You can also take the form to a VA regional office or a post office. Call the post office first, since not every one keeps burial flags. After the service the flag goes to the next of kin. If no next of kin claims it, a close friend can ask for it.

If you want a display case, **then** know that it's a separate purchase. The flag itself is no cost. **If** a flag is later lost or destroyed, **then** know that VA can't replace it, though some veterans groups may help.

Where this is written down: 38 U.S.C. § 2301; 38 CFR § 1.10.

Done when you know who filed VA Form 27-2008 and that the flag will be at the service.

STEP 4

Decide between a VA national cemetery and another cemetery.

For an eligible veteran, a VA national cemetery provides these at no cost to the family: the gravesite, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. A spouse or surviving spouse, a minor child, and in some cases an unmarried adult dependent child can be eligible for burial there too, even if they die later.

If you want a national cemetery, **then** you or the funeral director call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117 with the DD214 ready. **If** you're thinking about a state or tribal veterans cemetery, **then** call that cemetery, because it sets its own rules. **If** you choose a private cemetery, **then** the veteran may still be eligible for the flag, a government headstone, marker, or medallion, and the certificate.

The pre-need eligibility decision (VA Form 40-10007) is only for planning before a death. A surviving spouse can still use it to plan their own burial.

Where this is written down: 38 U.S.C. § 2402; 38 CFR § 38.620.

Done when the family has chosen the cemetery and, for a national cemetery, the burial is scheduled.

STEP 5

Request the headstone, marker, or medallion before you buy a private one.

At a national, state, or military post cemetery, the cemetery orders the government headstone or marker as part of arranging the burial. At a private or town cemetery, you request it yourself. Use VA Form 40-1330, Claim for Standard Government Headstone or Marker. If the grave has a privately bought headstone, you can ask for a bronze medallion instead, on VA Form 40-1330M, Claim for Government Medallion for Placement in a Private Cemetery.

If the veteran's service began late, as enlisted after September 7, 1980, or as an officer after October 16, 1981, **then** ask about the minimum-service rule. It's generally 24 months of continuous active duty. **If** you aren't sure he's eligible, **then** send what you have with the DD214 and ask a free accredited representative.

Do not sign for a private marker until you've asked about the government one. That's where families pay twice.

Where this is written down: 38 U.S.C. § 2306; 38 CFR § 38.630.

Done when the cemetery has ordered the marker, or your VA Form 40-1330 or 40-1330M is sent and a copy is in the folder.

STEP 6

Request the Presidential Memorial Certificate.

It's an engraved paper certificate signed by the current president. At a national cemetery burial, VA presents one to the next of kin. If the veteran was eligible for a national cemetery but was buried somewhere else, the next of kin, a relative, or a friend can ask for one. Apply online at va.gov, or on VA Form 40-0247 by mail, fax, or at a VA regional office. Send copies of the death certificate and DD214, never originals. VA accepts more than one request, so several family members can each have one.

Where this is written down: 38 U.S.C. § 112.

Done when the certificate was presented at the burial, or your request is in and dated.

STEP 7

Check for the automatic burial payment, then claim any other burial allowance.

If the surviving spouse is listed on the veteran's VA record, VA may pay a set burial amount automatically when it learns of the death. Other burial benefits are claimed on VA Form 21P-530EZ, Application for Burial Benefits. Apply online, or mail it to Department of Veterans Affairs, Pension Intake Center, PO Box 5365, Janesville, WI 53547-5365. The first eligible person to file is paid: the surviving spouse, a legal-union partner, a child, a parent, or the estate's executor. Keep itemized bills that show who paid. For transportation, VA asks for an itemized receipt. This guide prints no amounts. Check them at va.gov.

If the death was service connected, **then** there's no time limit to claim. **If** it wasn't, **then** the claim generally has to reach VA within two years after the burial. **If** his discharge was corrected after he died, **then** the two years run from the date of the correction. **If** he died while hospitalized by VA, **then** there's no time limit. That includes a VA facility, VA-paid care elsewhere, a nursing home VA paid for, a state veterans home under VA's nursing home program, and authorized travel for VA care. Plot or interment and transportation costs have no time limit. **If** you can't tell which rule fits, **then** ask a free accredited representative now.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.1702(a), (b); 38 CFR § 3.1703(a); 38 CFR § 3.1706(b).

Done when you've confirmed any automatic payment, and any other claim is filed, or you've written down the date it's due.

STEP 8

Read the burial decision letter and keep the paper.

The letter says what VA approved and under which allowance. A request for more evidence isn't a denial. It usually means VA needs a receipt, proof of who paid, or a service record. A denial often turns on one fact, such as whether the death was service connected.

If the claim was denied or only partly approved, **then** bring the letter to a free accredited representative right away. For most VA regional office decisions you have one year from the date of the notice to ask for a review. Read the deadline on your own letter.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.2500(a).

Done when the letter and every receipt are in the folder, and any review question is in front of a representative.

Recap Checklist

- ☐ Found the DD214, or a dated request for a copy is in.
- ☐ Military funeral honors requested, and I know who requested them.
- ☐ Burial flag requested on VA Form 27-2008.
- ☐ Cemetery chosen; a national cemetery burial is scheduled through 800-535-1117.
- ☐ Headstone, marker, or medallion ordered by the cemetery or requested on VA Form 40-1330 or 40-1330M.
- ☐ Presidential Memorial Certificate presented or requested.
- ☐ Automatic payment checked; any burial allowance claim filed on VA Form 21P-530EZ or its due date written down.
- ☐ Decision letter and receipts filed; any review question taken to a representative.

Reminder: rules and rates change. Check any current figure at [va.gov](https://www.va.gov). Help from an accredited Veterans Service Organization is free. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim. After that, they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. This guide prepared you for the task. The evidence in your file decides the result.

Get Free, Accredited Help

For anything about your own claim, talk to an accredited representative. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Organization is free. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim. After that, they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. Free help is available through Veterans Service Organizations such as the DAV, VFW, and American Legion, and through county and state veterans offices.

To find one near you, visit va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative. Representation begins only when you sign VA Form 21-22 (for a Veterans Service Organization) or 21-22a (for an individual agent or attorney). With one rare exception for a single unpaid case, only accredited people can represent you before the VA, and only an accredited agent or attorney can charge you a fee. Nothing in this guide creates that relationship.

A warning about claim sharks. Anyone who offers to file your initial claim for a fee, or who guarantees you a rating or a percentage, is selling something you shouldn't buy. Accredited Veterans Service Organizations help at no charge, and accredited claims agents and attorneys may charge only after VA issues its initial decision, within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. Report predatory companies to the VA Office of Inspector General at 1-800-488-8244.

Keep Going: The Full Guide

This field guide is the short, do-this-now companion to the book *What to Do When a Veteran Dies*. See every FWD Assist HQ title that is out now at fwdassisthq.com/books.

Current as of October 2026. Rules, forms, and figures change. Check current details at va.gov.

About the Author

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J. Erickson is a service-disabled Air Force veteran. He served as a military firefighter and as a veteran service officer, where he spent years walking veterans through the same claims process he writes about now. He holds an MBA and writes plain-language guides for veterans who want to understand the system without a translator.

He writes the For the Rest of Us series at fwdassisthq.com. This guide is published by FWD Assist HQ as a veteran education resource. It is not affiliated with or endorsed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.