

After Vet Death Guide

What to Do Afterwards

Whether you're a spouse, a dependent who has recently lost your military veteran or you're a retired military veteran looking to make sure all your "ducks are in a row" for your next of kin in case you pass away — knowing what to do when a military veteran or retiree dies is important.

In this guide, we'll address how to prepare for the event of a military veteran passing, who you need to contact, required documentation and more.

Where to Start if a Military Retiree or Veteran Has Died

First, you may need to contact the following agencies about the military member's death:

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)

- Your local Casualty Assistance Office
- Veterans Administration
- Social Security
- Defense Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS)
- FEDVIP/BENEFEDS

Contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service is the military pay agency. You will need to make an initial verbal report of the retirees/veteran's death immediately. You can contact DFAS by:

- Calling 1-888-332-7411 or 1-800-321-1080
- Reporting online on the [DFAS website](#).

By reporting the military member's death, you are notifying DFAS to stop military retirement pay. It is important to do this immediately, otherwise DFAS will recoup the payments later.

After they halt payment, DFAS will send out a packet for the surviving spouse or dependent to request survivor benefits payments. This packet will include:

- DD Form 2656-7
- Standard Form 1174
- FMS Form 2231
- Form W-4 or W4-P

Once you have completed these forms, return them to:

Defense Finance and Accounting Service U.S. Military Annuitant Pay
8899 E. 56th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46249-1300

Be sure to include a copy of the military member's death certificate

Contact the Casualty Assistance Office

The casualty assistance office is in charge of taking requests as well as scheduling military funeral honors for the veteran who died. Funeral honors details will perform military rites for veterans, retirees and current service members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard.

[Click here](#) to find your local casualty assistance office.

The Casualty Assistance Office will require a copy of the completed DD Form 214.

In addition to funeral honors, the casualty assistance office may be able to help the family cope with the loss of their veteran, understand their entitlements and apply for various benefits.

Most often, funeral directors request a local veteran organization to provide funeral honors, but if specific arrangements are requested, talk to your Casualty Assistance Office about these requests.

The Casualty Assistance Office will need the following information in order to assist you:

- Full name, rank and social security number of the deceased service member
- Branch of service (Army, Navy, etc.) and component (active duty, reserve or National Guard)
- Date and place of death
- Circumstances of death (natural causes, accident, military service injury/illness, etc.)
- Name, address and phone number of the funeral home that is handling the details
- Location, date and time of the memorial service at which the military honors are needed — *don't stress if you don't have this information yet, you'll still want to call to give them the information mentioned above and call back with these details once you know.*

Contact the Veterans Administration

Most deceased veterans are eligible for a free marker or headstone from the Veterans Administration and can be buried in a national cemetery. The VA may also help cover a burial allowance of:

- Up to \$300 for a non-service-connected death
- Up to \$2000 for a service-connected death

You can use this allowance to cover funeral expenses.

Depending on the benefits program that the veteran and survivor are a part of, additional benefits may be available. To find out what additional benefits may be available to you, reach out [to your local Veterans Service Office](#).

In order to start this process with the VA, you will need copies of:

- The veteran's DD Form 214
- Your marriage certificate — *if applicable*
- The veteran's death certificate

For more information on eligibility requirements, benefits and how to submit your application, visit the [VA's burial benefits website](#).

Contact Social Security

After a military veteran or retiree dies, you must contact your local Social Security Administration office to report their death, though they may already be aware that your loved one has died.

Most surviving spouses, as well as dependents (under certain circumstances), will be eligible for benefits, including a one-time payment of \$225 as a death benefit. If the deceased military member was the primary earner for your household, as a spouse you may begin receiving a larger social security payment.

In order to receive social security benefits, you must apply for them. Benefits are determined on a case-by-case basis. To learn more, contact your local Social Security Administration and schedule an appointment.

You can reach the national Social Security Administration office at 1-800-772-1213 for more information.

Contact the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System

DEERS is the system that tracks active duty and retired military members, as well as their dependents, in order to document eligibility for benefits.

Contact DEERS as soon as possible at 1-800-538-9552 to tell them the military retiree or veteran has died.

DEERS will notify Tricare of the service member's death so you will not have to contact them personally.

Contact FEDVIP/BENEFEDS (If Applicable)

Although you don't have to contact TRICARE directly, you will need to contact TRICARE's program for retirees at 1-888-838-8738.

You will need to find out which health care plan your loved one had so you can notify the correct regional vendor of your loved one's death. If you (or any dependents) remain eligible for these benefits, be sure to request that the "plus-one" insurance premium is reduced. This will ensure that you do not have to continue paying premiums for the deceased military member.

Billing for your health care benefits may change; the premiums can't be deducted from your survivor benefits. Instead, you may need to pay a monthly bill for your health care coverage.

Resources Available to Assist After a Military Veteran or Retiree Dies

Legal Assistance After a Military Veteran or Retiree Death

Surviving spouses and family members of military personnel have access to free legal assistance at most military bases. The legal office can answer questions, offer advice and help you with forms or other documents like wills and powers of attorney.

While the legal office is there to assist you, they can not represent you in a courtroom. For legal assistance near you, contact your local JAG office.

Financial Assistance

In the event of a financial emergency, military relief organizations may be able to assist you.

To apply for financial assistance, download **DA Form 700** via one of these websites:

- [Army Emergency Relief](#)
- [Navy – Marine Corps Relief Society](#)
- [Air Force Aid Society](#)

Note: Each organization may have its own form, rules or regulations to apply for assistance.

Common Documents Needed After a Military Veteran or Retiree's Death

Having all your documents in one place can help you when you report your service member's death to each organization.

Keep the following documents on hand to streamline the paperwork process:

- Separation notice DD-214
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claim number
- Social security numbers
- Insurance policies

- Certified copies of marriage license, birth certificates of children
- Certified copies of the Veteran's death certificate

Other documents you might need include:

- **DD Form 2656-7**, Verification for Survivor Annuity — *this document will notify parties if the monthly annuity from the Survivors Benefit Program is payable to the authorized dependent for life.*
- **Standard Form 1174**, Claim for Unpaid Compensation — *this form designates the beneficiary's authorized payment of the deceased military member's retired pay, as well as any other allowances or awards through the first of the month through the day of death.*
- **FMS Form 2231** — FastStart Direct Deposit form to the beneficiary's bank account
- **Form W-4 or W4-P** — IRS Tax Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity payments
- **Form 180** — *This form is used to request copies or information from military personnel records, like a DD Form 214, discharge certificates, etc. You can download this [form with its instructions here](#).*

Preparing for the Unknown: What You Can Do to Prepare for a Military Veteran or Retiree Death

While it's hard to consider your death or that of a loved one, being prepared can ease some of the burden while you or your loved ones grieve.

Start by getting your files together, these files might include:

- **Military documents:** Retirement orders or separation papers, medical records and any phone numbers for the local/nearest military installation that will be able to help.

You can use this file to store any retired/separation pay information from DFAS. Include any VA claims that might still be pending, along with the address for the VA office that is processing your claim.

Also, consider providing the following information:

- Deductions being made from your benefits
- The name, relationship and contact information of your beneficiary
- **Annuities:** Keep information about any survivor benefit plans in this file. If you or your dependent need to obtain additional information on annuity claims, [reach out to DFAS](#).
- **Personal and financial documents:** Include documents like marriage certificates, divorce decrees, adoptions and naturalization papers. Insurance policies including life, property and accident insurance. Also include records of your state, federal and property taxes, tax bills and deeds. Keep a list of all bank accounts, safety deposit boxes, any

securities owned, charge accounts and credit cards with account numbers and billing addresses.

After you've prepared your files, consider discussing your plans with your loved ones, pre-arranging funeral details and drawing up a will to make your wishes clear.

It may feel like a morbid task, but taking the time to discuss your wishes and organize documents can help make the process easier to handle when the time comes.

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