

Burial benefits available through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Burial Flag, Headstone, and Grave Marker - These are provided at no cost for honorably discharged veterans.
- Burial Allowance for Service-Related Death - The VA will pay up to \$2,000 toward burial expenses for deaths on, or after, September 11, 2001.
- Burial Allowance - The VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses and a \$300 plot-interment allowance for deaths on, or after, December 1, 2001. The plot-interment allowance is \$150 for deaths prior to December 1, 2001. If the death happened while the veteran was in a VA hospital or under VA-contracted nursing home care, some or all of the costs for transporting the deceased's remains may be reimbursed.
- Death Pension - This benefit is payable to eligible dependents of a deceased wartime veteran, with specific income limitations.

Planning Ahead

Making sure that the member's family is knowledgeable about a variety of personal financial and family issues is important. Experts recommend preparing some type of a personal log to document this information. There are a number of steps that can be taken in advance to help the transition go smoother for family members grieving from the loss of a loved one. The following is a checklist to assist people with this preparation.

- Does each spouse have a general understanding of the family's assets and investments; this includes knowing WHERE the money is and WHY it is there?

- Does each spouse know where all important papers are: bank account statements; investments; deeds and insurance policies (life, medical, property/casualty, long term care)? This may include website login information and who to contact when needed.

- Does each spouse have a will? Along with a will, does each spouse know the other's wishes? Life support and quality of life issues are among the things to discuss and put in writing. It may be beneficial to consider a living will, an advance medical directive and a durable power of attorney.

- Keep one folder with original copies of the following forms, and any others that are important to you. Locate a safe storage location for these and other important originals, preferably outside the home:
 - Marriage and Birth Certificate
 - Wills
 - Trust
 - Advance Medical Directives
 - Powers of Attorney
 - DD Form 214
 - Social Security Papers
 - Divorce Decrees
 - Adoption papers
 - Naturalization Papers
 - Vehicle Title and Registration Papers

Keep another folder with copies of these forms in an easily accessible and secure location.

Does each spouse have access to current names, addresses, and contact information for:

- Family Members
- Attorney
- Financial Planner
- CPA
- Close Friends
- Place of worship
- Funeral, burial and church service details

- Does each spouse know where previous years of IRS returns are and where current year materials are kept?
- Are medical and dental records up to date? Does each spouse know where all records are kept, including pet records?

Reference Phone Numbers and Websites

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Benefits (800) 827-1000
Life Insurance (800) 669-8477
Website: www.va.gov

Social Security Administration
(800) 772-1213
Website: www.socialsecurity.gov

Defense Finance & Accounting Service
Retired and Annuity Pay
(800) 321-1080
Website: www.dfas.mil/

United States Coast Guard Headquarters
Decedent Affairs
Active Duty (866) 772-8724
Retired (800) 772-8724
Website: <http://www.uscg.mil/ppc/ras/>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
Commissioned Personnel Center (800) 224-6622
Website: <http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/>

U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps
Survivor Assistance (800) 638-8744
Website: www.usphs.gov

Navy Military Personnel Command
Casualty Assistance Branch
Active Duty/Reserves (800) 368-3202
Retired (800) 321-1080
Website: www.npc.navy.mil/commandsupport/casualtyassistance/

Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps
Casualty Assistance (800) 847-1597
Website: www.hqmc.usmc.mil

Military Officers Association of America
Survivor Assistance (800) 245-8762
Website: www.moaa.org

Office of Service Member's Group Life
Insurance
(800) 419-1473
Report a Death (800) 669-8477
Website: www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/default.htm

Tragedy Assistance Program for
Survivors, Inc.
(800) 959-TAPS (8277)
Website: www.taps.org

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
(703) 696-4904
Website: www.nmcrs.org

Arlington National Cemetery
(703) 607-8585
(877) 907-8585

Tricare
North (877) 874-2273
South (800) 444-5445
West (888) 874-9378
Website: <http://www.tricare.mil/>