



Planning Your Veteran Funeral

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The final act of kindness to your loved ones may come after your death in the form of well-planned funeral arrangements. As uncomfortable as the subject may seem, researching and documenting how you would like to be laid to rest is as much a benefit to yourself as it is to your loved ones. Do you wish to have military funeral honors? Would you like a military marker on your headstone? These are questions that your family must answer for you, if you do not plan now. JWV has created this Practical Guide to assist you with the task.

Veteran Funeral Planning Essentials

Proof of Service

Your family will need to prove that you were a veteran to receive your benefits and arrange services. If you do not have your Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD214), you may acquire a copy by:

- a) Visiting <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records> and completing an online request
- b) Downloading Form 180 here <http://www.archives.gov/research/order/standard-form-180.pdf> and mailing or faxing the completed form to the National Archives

Veteran Benefits

Your benefits cover some, but do not cover all the funeral arrangements.

- **Casket:** Unless death occurs while active duty, caskets are not free.
- **Non-VA National Cemetery Burial:** For service-related death, the VA will pay up to \$2000 of burial expenses at a private cemetery. Non-service-related, up to \$700, depending on eligibility. (VA Form 21-530)
- **Headstone or Marker:** Upon request and at no charge, the VA will furnish a Government headstone or marker for a veteran's grave anywhere in the world. (VA Form 40-1330)
- **Bronze Medallion:** In lieu of a headstone, the VA will furnish a bronze medallion to be affixed to a privately purchased headstone. The medallion is free, but does not include fees to affix it to the headstone. (VA Form 40-1330)
- **Service Medals, Decorations & Awards:** Next-of-kin may request replacement medals, generally at no charge.

US Flag

Your family may obtain a free US flag from a VA regional office and most Post Offices. Your family or funeral director submits the request along with:

- a) VA Form 27-2800: Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes
- b) Copy of your DD214 or Discharge Papers

In absence of a DD 214, the VA will issue a flag when a statement is made by a person of established character and reputation that s/he personally knows the deceased to have been an honorably discharged veteran.

Veteran Honors

At no charge, an eligible veteran is entitled to:

- **Military Funeral Honors:** includes the folding and presenting of the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of Taps. Generally, the family tells the funeral director who will put in this request.
- **JWV Funeral Honors:** Speak with your local Post to learn what funeral services it offers. Some do a reading, some present the Colors, every Post does what it can.



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- **Presidential Memorial Certificate:** A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged deceased Veterans. The Certificate is provided to your family upon request from your local VA office.
- **US Flag:** See previous section. on flags.

Burial

VA National Cemetery: If you meet eligibility requirements, you can be buried or inurned in a VA National Cemetery. The VA will furnish the headstone and grave liner and the cemetery is maintained at no cost to the family. However, you may not reserve a space in the cemetery ahead of time, there is no guarantee that a family member will be interred nearby, and ceremonies are not conducted on weekends.

Private Cemetery: In many states you can pre-pay your funeral expenses through a trust account. Obtain a gravesite now, if possible. State funeral homes do not generally sell gravesites.

Questions to Consider While Planning Your Funeral

- Do I want a simple, traditional, or elaborate funeral? At which funeral home will I make arrangements?
- How would I like to pay for my services? Who will be in charge of carrying out my funeral arrangements? Does this person know where I keep my discharge papers and other important documents?
- How do I wish to be laid to rest? What sort of headstone might I want?
- What military protocols or traditions might I want included at my funeral?
- Do I want my military service and/or JWV membership to be reflected on my headstone?
- Where do I want to be laid to rest? Who would I like to speak at my funeral or reception?
- Do I wish to have my military service mentioned, fully described and/or honored? At the ceremony? At a reception?
- What organizations, such as JWV, should be informed of my passing?

Get Started Today!

- Acquire copies of your DD214 as soon as possible.
- Choose at least two loved ones with whom you will share your plans. Inform them of your wishes. Give them access to the necessary documents.
- Record your military story. Whether you choose to have your story read by your JWV Post at your funeral or not, help us fulfill our mission of showing the world that American Jews proudly serve. Write your war narrative