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How to Notify Veterans Affairs (VA) of a Death: Step-By-Step

Updated 4/26/2022



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Knowing [what to do when someone dies](#) is often challenging. A reason for this could be because the appropriate [death notification checklist](#) for one individual may not apply to another.

For example, maybe a deceased loved one was a veteran. If so, you may have questions about the VA death notification process.

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Don't worry if this is the case; Notifying [an event of passing](#) is a simple process. This guide will cover the basics, helping you better understand the steps you should take

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when a veteran in your family passes away.

Who's Supposed to Notify the VA When a Veteran Dies?

The closest surviving family member of a deceased veteran will typically notify the VA of their death, which in many cases is the deceased's spouse. If the spouse is unable to notify the VA for any reason, the children or other close family members of the deceased may notify the VA on their behalf. In general, the executor of the deceased's estate is responsible for notifying the VA.

Keep in mind that funeral directors are typically the ones who arrange the military honors and military funerals when veterans die. If you're working with a funeral home that arranges military honors, the funeral director may also assist you with the VA death notification process.

Regardless, it's essential to notify the VA relatively soon after a death. If the deceased received VA benefits, or if the VA provided any benefits (such as retirement checks) after the deceased passed away, the VA may require the executor of their estate to pay them back. Naturally, this can result in difficulties or confusion if you don't address this issue as soon as possible.

» **MORE:** [Everything you need to settle your loved one's estate in California.](#)

Steps for Reporting a Death to the VA

Again, the VA death notification process is reasonably simple. All you have to do is take these steps:

1. Research

Although it is important to notify the VA soon after a passing, you might first want to set aside time to [research the benefits](#) the VA sometimes offers to the surviving loved ones of deceased veterans. While you can notify the VA of death first, then contact the VA again later after you've had more time to research potential benefits, notifying the VA of a death and beginning to discuss benefits at the same time will naturally speed up the process.

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The VA may request proof of a loved one's death after you call to notify the department of their death. Prepare accordingly by securing a death certificate. Our guide on [how to get a](#)

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[death certificate](#) will help if you're unsure of how to do this.

You may also need a copy of your loved one's service record if you wish to apply for benefits or request military honors at a funeral (although a funeral director can assist with this process). You can request a copy via the [National Archives](#).

There are also certain documents a funeral director will usually need to arrange for military honors during a funeral. They include the following:

- Certified copy of service record
- VA claim number (if applicable)
- Social Security number of the deceased, as well as those of any spouses and/or dependent children
- Certified copies of marriage license and death or divorce certificates if the deceased had any previous marriages
- Certified copies of children's birth certificates
- Certified copy of the death certificate
- Insurance policies

3. Call

The best way to notify the VA when a loved one has passed is to contact the VA through their national call center at 1-800-827-1000. Again, if you've already done your research, you can also use this opportunity to ask about benefits.

Since the call center may be somewhat busy, make sure you're contacting the VA when you have enough time to wait for a representative to take your call.

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4. Take additional steps based on VA advice

The final steps in the VA death notification process will depend on various factors and circumstances. For example, if the VA was providing benefits to your loved one, the

department may have done so through your nearest VA regional office.

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The VA may advise you to contact the regional office to stop the benefits. Or, they might ask that you contact the regional office if you were in some capacity an active participant in VA programs.

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Additionally, if you're applying for benefits as the survivor of a deceased veteran, the VA representative with whom you speak will tell you which forms you need to submit. Find the appropriate forms on the VA's website, fill them out accurately, and submit them to the address the representative provided to you.

What Happens After You Report the Death to the VA?

A range of potential outcomes may happen after you complete the VA death notification process. The following are a few common examples:

Repayment

Again, the VA sometimes distributes benefits to veterans after they've passed because the deceased's survivors didn't notify the VA right away, or the VA distributed the benefits immediately before a death. If this happens, a VA representative will explain how much you (or the executor of the deceased's estate) must pay back and how you can go about doing so.

Receiving benefits

You may qualify to receive benefits or take advantage of certain VA services (such as counseling services) as the survivor of a deceased veteran. Requesting said benefits involves filling out the applicable forms and filing a claim.

You may not receive benefits that you're entitled to right away. It can take the VA some time to process a claim and distribute benefits. If you'd like to check on the status of your claim, the VA recommends calling the department at 1-800-827-1000. The VA also requests that the loved ones of deceased veterans call that number to update their contact information if they receive benefits.

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Returning equipment

Along with asking the executor of a veteran's estate to pay back any benefits the VA

distributed after or immediately before their death, the VA may also potentially request that the executor return such VA-issued equipment as wheelchairs, medical beds, etc.

In these circumstances, a VA representative will usually advise the executor to contact the relevant VA hospital's Prosthetic Department. They can return the equipment to the hospital

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directly or arrange for someone from the hospital to come pick it up at their home.

Arranging for military honors

If you completed the VA notification process quickly in the immediate aftermath of a loved one's passing, you may have done so before officially choosing a funeral home. Thus, you might have asked about military honors while notifying the VA of a death.

If you did, the VA might have provided you with information about funeral homes that arrange military honors near you, as well as information about local veterans' cemeteries. You might then contact said funeral homes and cemeteries to ensure your loved one's funeral properly honors and acknowledges their military service.

It's also worth noting that your loved one might have received an Aid and Attendance pension benefit or similar benefit from a separate veteran's organization. Often, it's possible to use this benefit to cover funeral costs, whether in full or at least partially.

Support

This guide has provided a lot of technical information without touching on the emotions you might be feeling after a loved one passes. It's important to tend to your own needs while also completing practical processes like notifying the VA.

After the VA death notification process is complete, you might qualify to access the VA's counseling and grief support services for surviving family members of deceased veterans. There are also many independent grief support groups for loved ones of veterans who've passed away.

Conduct some research to find such groups in your area if you believe you could benefit from participating in them. You can also find online grief support groups if you don't wish to attend meetings in person.

VA Death Notification: A Simple But Important Process

Hopefully, this guide answered your essential questions about VA death notifications. That said, it's important to know that notifying the VA may not be the only step you should take

when a loved one who served in the armed forces passes away. For more information on this subject, check our [guide on what to do when a veteran dies](#).
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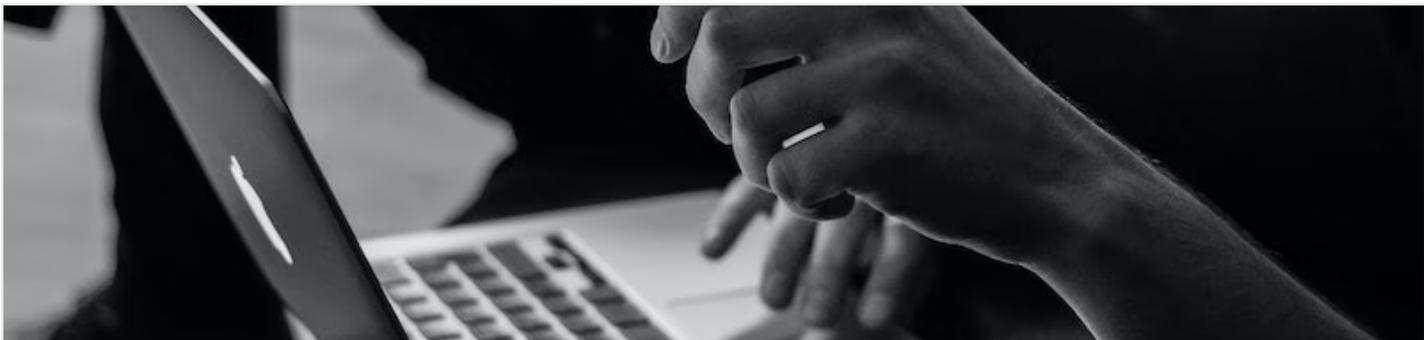
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