




What to Do

When a Veteran Has Passed Away



PORTLEGAL
GUARD GUIDE DEFEND



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Survivor's Complete Checklist: What To Do After the Passing of a Veteran

The death of a veteran is a painful reality that must be faced. We can't really plan for it emotionally and when you add in urgent tasks and important decisions that must be made, 'overwhelming' can be an understatement.

What we can do, however, is make ourselves aware. We can learn about what to do and expect when a veteran passes, so our time for grieving and honoring the veteran is not lost or compromised.

At Port Legal, we know this is not a comforting subject. However, we also understand the importance of learning about this challenging time so that we know what to expect and ensure we don't miss something important.

When a veteran passes away, there are things we need to do to manage the veteran's property and other assets. These tasks can be broken into four phases: Immediately, 2-3 Days After, Before the Funeral, and After the Funeral.

In this comprehensive checklist, we will break down important tasks and to-dos, complete with tips and other helpful information, to help guide you through this tough terrain.



Greg Port
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IMMEDIATELY

1. Get a legal pronouncement of death.

If the veteran did not pass away inside a hospital, you'll need to contact someone to legally pronounce the death, such as:

- If the veteran passes away under hospice care, call the hospice nurse who can declare the death and help facilitate the transport of the veteran's body.
- If the veteran passes away at home without hospice care, call 911 immediately. If applicable, have on hand a do-not-resuscitate document. Without one, paramedics will generally commence emergency procedures. Except where permitted to pronounce death, the emergency responders will likely take the person to an emergency room for a doctor to make the official declaration.

2. Arrange for transportation of the veteran's body if they passed away outside of a hospital. If no autopsy is needed and/or a funeral home hasn't been chosen, the body can be picked up by a mortuary. By law, a mortuary must provide price info over the phone.



2-3 Days After

In this section, you'll find 4 steps that must be addressed 2 to 3 days after passing, along with a few optional tasks, depending on your loved one's wishes.

Choose a funeral home.

If the veteran did not identify which funeral home to use, you and your family will need to find and decide on a funeral home for the services. Most families will also want the funeral home to transport the family from the morgue to its facility.

Discuss funeral preparations.

Planning a funeral can involve a lot of work during a difficult time, so it may help to bring together key family members to help with the preparations and provide emotional support. Doing this will be especially helpful if the veteran left little or no instructions. Additionally, most funeral homes will have a director who is experienced in the process and can help you and your family make the perfect arrangements to honor the veteran. A few questions to ask during this time include:

- Will the body be embalmed or cremated?
- Will there be a casket, and if so, will it be open or closed?
- If body will be cremated, will the ashes be scattered? If the ashes are deposited in an urn, will it be placed in a mausoleum?
- Where is the burial site?
- Are there religious traditions that need to be respected?
- Will there be contributions to charities in lieu of flowers?

Veterans, service members, and their dependents can be buried in a national cemetery for free. If buried elsewhere, veterans who at the time of death were entitled to receive VA disability payments can receive an allowance toward burial and funeral expenses. This allowance may be greater if the death was related to military service or if it occurred in a Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital. Other benefits may include a ceremonial American flag, a headstone, and Presidential memorial certificate. You can find many details about options at the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website](#). You can also call Veterans Affairs at 1-800-827-1000 or your local veterans agency.



BEFORE THE FUNERAL

Meet with the director handling the funeral or memorial arrangements.

As a veteran, the decedent could be eligible for special arrangements. A range of benefits can help tailor a veteran's service. You may be able to get assistance with the funeral, burial plot or other benefits. You can find many details about options at the U.S. Department of [Veterans Affairs website \(pdf\)](#). Or call Veterans Affairs at 1-800-827-1000 or your local veterans agency. You can also inquire about [veteran's survivor benefits](#). Refer to any instruction the veteran might have left or to the earlier family discussion on funeral preparation to guide you through the many decision to be made.

“After a loved one passes, be encouraged by their passing and legacy... Live each day with encouragement knowing that they are proud...”

*Matt Fraser
American Athlete*

Arrange for a headstone.

There are many options available to purchase a headstone, whether through the cemetery or an outside vendor. You should consider consulting the cemetery about rules, regulations and specifications, particularly if you decide to purchase one from an outside vendor. Eligible veterans can receive free, Government-furnished headstones or markers if they died on or after November 1, 1990. [You can inquire about headstones or markers here.](#)



Necessary Documents

Compile the following information that the funeral home will need in order to finalize the death certificate:

- ☐ Deceased's Full Legal Name (first, middle, and last name)
- ☐ Maiden Name (if applicable)
- ☐ Home Address
- ☐ Social Security Number
- ☐ Date of Birth
- ☐ Date of Death
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Race/Ethnicity
- ☐ Marital Status
- ☐ Spouse's first and last name (if applicable)
- ☐ Highest level of education attained
- ☐ Occupation
- ☐ Place of Birth (City and State)
- ☐ Father's Name
 - ☐ Birth City
 - ☐ Birth State
- ☐ Mother's Name
 - ☐ Birth City
 - ☐ Birth State

For a Veteran, you will also need the following information:

- ☐ Entered Service Date
- ☐ Entered Service Place
- ☐ Service Number
- ☐ Separated from Service Date
- ☐ Separated from Service Place
- ☐ Grade, Rank or Rating
- ☐ Organization and Branch of Service

Conclusion

At Port Legal, we know this is not a comforting subject. However, we also understand the importance of learning about this challenging time so that we know what to expect and ensure we don't miss something important.

In this comprehensive guide, we break down important tasks and to-dos, complete with tips and other helpful information, to help guide you through the tough terrain of losing a loved one.

However, this material is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified attorney, tax advisor, investment professional, or insurance agent. Before making any commitment regarding the issues discussed here, please consult with the appropriate professional.

If you have recently lost a loved one and need advice specific to your situation, please call me at 614-641-7399 or visit portlegal.com to setup a free consultation. Our initial exploratory consultations are completely free of charge and intended to equip you to make the best decision for you, your family and your business.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Greg Port in black ink.

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