

A photograph of a family walking away from the camera on a wooden boardwalk or bridge. A man in a blue and white plaid shirt and a woman in a teal top and dark pants are holding the hands of a small child in a striped shirt and shorts. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

Your Life, Your Family, Your Decisions

Military Survivor Pre-Planning Checklist

Since 1879, American Armed Forces Mutual Aid Association (AAFMAA) Members and their survivors have relied on our unique and exclusive Survivor Assistance Services for compassionate, thoughtful support after the loss of a loved one. This dedicated team provides your family with the personal attention they need at their time of loss.

It can be challenging for those you leave behind if they are not prepared for those first few difficult days after the death of a loved one. To help alleviate those challenges, we have created a checklist of recommended actions you should plan for in advance — and we encourage you to modify this list with other items that are important to you so your family will have everything they need when the time comes.

Recommended Actions

As you go through your military career and life, there are several documents that may impact your loved ones' monetary entitlements once you're gone. As an AAFMAA Member, you have the benefit of keeping these vital documents in your own secure online Digital Vault. It is also important to ensure your family or personal representative know how and where to access them when the time comes.

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

- Military Documents
 - DD-214
 - VA Disability Award(s)
 - Recent LES or Retired Pay Statement
- Legal Documents
 - Power of Attorney
 - Medical Directives
 - Will, Trust and Estate Plans
 - Disposition of Final Remains
- Marriage Certificates and Divorce Decrees
- List of Life Insurance Policies, Including Contact Information
- Social Security Numbers for the Servicemember, Spouse, and Dependent Children

If you're concerned that you are not adequately prepared for every stage of life, contact an **AAFMAA Membership Coordinator** at **888-303-6079** to find out what options may be available to you.



Plan Your Final Arrangements

We all have an idea of how we would like others to remember us, celebrate our lives, and handle our final moments. Your loved ones will need to be prepared to follow your wishes, but they need your help to do that.

TAKE TIME NOW TO:

- Select a funeral home.
- Acquire a copy of your DD-214 (The Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty).
- Acquire a Right of Disposition of Final Remains document.
- Select a burial site or, for burial at a Veteran National Cemetery, complete [the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Form VA 40-10007](#).
- Note the preferred type of service, music, and any special requests.
- Determine if there will be an organ donation.

Prepare a Letter of Instruction

Once you've determined what your final arrangements should be, you'll need to inform your loved ones on how to fulfill them. Creating lists is a great way to concisely convey what needs to happen, by whom, how, when, and where.

YOU CAN START HERE:

- List the people who must be contacted about your death, including family, friends, classmates, and business associates.
- List the organizations or clubs to which you belong.
- List your banks, investments, and outstanding debts.
- List the employers for whom you've worked during your career.
- Prepare your obituary and collect photos.
- Identify your expected death benefits and monthly income for your survivors.
- Prepare any memos and personal effects you would like to pass on.





Understand Your Military and Government Benefits and Entitlements

Accessing the unique military benefits available to your family requires a certain level of expertise. The applications that must be completed can be difficult to navigate, and finding the documents to support the claims associated with your death can be overwhelming for survivors who are in mourning.

Survivors of AAFMAA Members receive personal assistance in applying and completing military and government forms from a dedicated **AAFMAA Survivor Assistance Team** representative. Our Survivor Assistance Services **Report a Death online form** helps us begin the claims process. As an AAFMAA Member, you have this service available to you.

Once we have identified the organizations that will provide your service-related benefits and entitlements, your Survivor Assistance Services coordinator will contact these organizations listed below: DFAS and VA and your life insurance companies. To claim the entitlements, your survivors will need to contact these organizations and follow the steps for each one below. We will be here to help them.

Defense Finance and Accounting Services

DFAS.MIL | 800-321-1080

- Stop Military Retired Pay
- Apply for Arrears of Military Retired Pay
- Apply for the Survivor Benefit Annuity Plan (SBP) from Military Retired Pay (if applicable)

Department of Veterans Affairs

VA.GOV | 800-827-1000

- Apply for VA Burial Markers, Flag and Presidential Certificate (applicable for all Honorable Discharges)
- Stop VA Disability Compensation for the Veteran
- Apply for VA Burial Allowance (if in receipt of VA compensation)
- Apply for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (service-connected deaths only)

Social Security Administration

SSA.GOV | 800 -772-1213

- The funeral home is required to report the death to Social Security
- Contact Social Security for survivor benefits associated with the death

Notify Life Insurance Companies

- Report the death of the insured to the insurance companies
- Request claim forms to be sent to the claimant
- Ask if settlements are offered for the insurance death benefit
- Update policies on which the deceased was beneficiary or the owner



Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System

DEERS | 800-538-9552

- Update your military ID Card.
- Update your status to Survivor.
- Ensure your TRICARE or TRICARE for Life account is current.

Notify Employers

- If the deceased was employed, beneficiaries may be entitled to benefits

Need Our Assistance?

AAFMAA is here for you. We can help your family receive the benefits and entitlements you have earned through your military service. First, you must ensure you have enough life insurance to adequately cover your final expenses and care for your loved ones after you're gone. Visit the AAFMAA Learning Hub for expert advice and information on selecting the right life insurance policy for your family. Then you can rest assured they'll have a personal survivor benefits coordinator to help them maximize your military benefits and entitlements.

If you need information about additional life insurance options that may be available to you, please visit aafmaa.com/life, email membership@aafmaa.com, or call us at **888-303-6079**. A military insurance expert will walk you through the application process and help determine exactly which policies might be the best fit for your family.

If you need support from a **Member Benefits Coordinator**, please email memberbenefits@aafmaa.com or call **703-707-1182**. We will be here for you when you need us.

