# VA Death Benefits Navigation Checklist

## Immediate Steps After Loss

* Obtain multiple certified copies of death certificate
* Locate veteran's military discharge papers (DD Form 214)
* Notify VA of veteran's passing (1-800-827-1000)
* Contact a funeral home to begin burial arrangements
* Decide between national cemetery burial or private cemetery

## Document Collection

* Military Service Records
* DD Form 214 (discharge papers)
* Service treatment records
* Any VA claim numbers or documentation
* Personal Documentation
* Death certificate (certified copy)
* Marriage certificate (for surviving spouses)
* Birth certificates (for dependent children)
* Social Security numbers for all claimants
* Banking information for direct deposit
* Recent tax returns or financial statements (if applying for pension)

## Burial Benefits Application

* Determine eligibility for burial benefits
* Complete [VA Form 21P-530EZ](https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21p-530ez/) (Application for Burial Benefits)
* Gather funeral home receipts and documentation
* Submit burial allowance claim within 2 years of burial
* Request Presidential Memorial Certificate
* Apply for headstone or marker if needed (VA Form 40-1330)

## Financial Benefits Application

* Determine eligibility for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
* Complete VA Form 21P-534EZ for DIC or survivors pension
* Gather proof of income and net worth (for pension claims)
* Submit any supporting medical evidence
* Document unreimbursed medical expenses

## Support Network Setup

**Contact a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) for free assistance**

* American Legion
* Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
* Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
* Consider visiting a VA regional office for in-person help
* Keep VA hotline number handy (1-800-827-1000)

## Follow-Up Tasks

* Create a system to track submitted documents
* Keep copies of all submitted paperwork
* Record claim numbers and reference numbers
* Set calendar reminders for following up on claims
* Document all communication with VA (dates, names, outcomes)

## Additional Considerations

* Check eligibility for Social Security benefits
* Update legal documents if needed
* Review veteran's life insurance policies
* Consider grief counseling through VA Vet Centers
* Join support groups for veteran families if desired

## Important Reminders

* File claims as soon as possible
* Keep original documents; submit copies
* Track application status regularly
* Appeal decisions if necessary (within deadline)
* Stay in contact with assigned VSO representative

Remember: These benefits were earned through service. Don't hesitate to seek help or ask questions during the process.