MarinesFinalExpense

FREE GUIDE

Marine veteran final expense planning guide

What the VA provides, what it leaves, and how a small policy fits

This guide is for Marine Corps veterans 50 and older and their spouses. It is not a VA publication and we are not the VA. VA rules and amounts change, so use the links to check the current figures before you decide.

1. Two bills, two businesses

When a Marine veteran dies, the family deals with a cemetery and a funeral home. At a VA national cemetery, the VA provides the gravesite, opening and closing, a grave liner, a government headstone or marker and care for an eligible veteran. The funeral home is a private business and sends its own bill.

$8,300

Median funeral with viewing and burial, 2023

Before cemetery charges. Source: NFDA. Viewing and cremation: $6,280.

The VA also pays a burial allowance to an eligible survivor after a claim. The amount is set by the date of death and changes each year, so check va.gov. It helps, but it rarely covers the funeral home bill.

2. What the VA offers a living veteran

- **SGLI** covers you while you serve and for 120 days after discharge.
- **VGLI** needs an application within 1 year and 120 days of separation. Within 240 days no health proof is needed. It is priced by age band.
- **VALife** is for veterans age 80 or younger with a service connected rating at any percentage, up to $40,000, guaranteed acceptance. The full amount pays after 2 years. Before that the VA pays back premiums plus interest.

General education, not insurance, legal or tax advice. Figures are examples unless a source is named. Prices and rules vary by state and insurer.

- **Conversion.** The VA says SGLI can be converted to a permanent policy within 120 days of discharge, and VGLI can be converted through participating insurers, without proving good health.

3. Where a small private policy fits

A final expense policy is a small whole life policy, usually $5,000 to $25,000, that pays cash to the person you name. It does not change what the VA owes you. It covers the funeral home, travel and last bills.

Plan	Health questions	Illness in the first years
Level	A short list, clean answers	Pays the full amount
Graded	A short list, some yes answers	Pays a reduced amount, then the full amount
Guaranteed issue	None	Premiums back, often with interest

4. How to size the amount

1. Start with a funeral home price list, or the NFDA median.
2. Add the urn or niche, family travel and last bills.
3. Subtract savings your family can reach within a week.
4. Round up to the next $1,000 and price that amount.

> Do not count a VA allowance or VALife in its first two years as cash on day one.

5. Five questions for an agent

- [ ] Are you licensed in my state, and what is your number?
- [ ] Does the plan pay in full from the first day?
- [ ] Will the premium ever rise?
- [ ] How does this fit with my VA benefits and VGLI?
- [ ] What does my family send in to claim, and how fast does it pay?

Sources

- VA National Cemetery Administration
  www.cem.va.gov/
- VA: Veterans Affairs Life Insurance (VALife)
  www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/valife/
- VA: Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI)
  www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/vgli/
- NFDA: funeral statistics
  nfda.org/news/statistics

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