

Survivor Benefits Guide

for the Air National Guard (AF) Retirees Surviving Spouse



When a loved one dies there are many things the surviving spouse, or other family member, must do. First are burial details, then resolving government benefits and finally the settlement of the retiree's estate. The information listed below will put you in contact with knowledgeable people who can answer your questions and assist you with this challenging task.

Note: An Air National Guard military retirement is no different than a US Air Force retirement. Check your ID card; it says "USAF Retired" on it. An Air National Guard Air Technician retirement is the same as a Federal Civil Service retirement.

Taking care of burial arrangements. First things first. Funeral directors will generally know how to handle all burial details, including how to make appropriate contacts to check on any funeral benefits available from the Veterans Affairs (VA). Your part is to provide the funeral director with the information they need to do their job. That information includes:

1. The deceased's DD 214, Report of Separation (active duty) is required to obtain VA burial benefits. The NGB Form 22 will also entitle you to certain military burial benefits.
2. Instructions for disposition of the body and choice of services. This would include burial, cremation, memorial services, etc.
3. Obituary information. You can put any information you want in the obituary. It normally includes a photo, date of death, desired personal information, names of relatives and funeral home burial information. NOTE: Recommend never putting the actual birth date in the obituary due to privacy concerns. Listing the birth year is adequate.
4. Information needed for the death certificate. This includes date and place of birth, father's name, mother's maiden name, etc. You will need enough copies to resolve necessary changes in asset paperwork. Normally, a minimum of 8 copies will be required.

After the burial it's time to get your finances in order. Do this without further delay. Contact all sources of annuity income (military and civil service pensions), Social Security, IRA's, TSP, life insurance policies, health insurance, bank accounts, etc. Following is a list of contacts that could be part of a Guard retiree's estate. All of these may not apply to your situation but check to be sure. There may also be other contacts not listed here.

1. Military Pension (DFAS): (1-888-332-7411, option 1, www.dfas.mil)
2. Federal Civil Service Pension (OPM): (1-888-767-6738, www.opm.gov/retire)
3. Social Security: (1-800-772-1213, www.ssa.gov. The Tucson office # is 1-866-331-2150)
4. Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account: (1-877-968-3778, www.tsp.gov)
5. Life insurance, Health insurance and Long Term Care insurance policies.
6. IRA and/or 401K accounts.
7. Bank/Credit Union accounts, creditors (credit cards, etc.), mortgages, safe deposit boxes, other financial accounts, etc.



How to resolve finances and establish military survivors benefits. You can resolve most survivor benefits issues yourself by calling the phone numbers provided on page 1. However, if you require assistance, help is available by calling a Veteran Benefit Specialist located in the Retired Activities Office at Davis-Monthan AFB. Their number is (520) 228-7205

Here are some other things that will need to be accomplished. These items can be done by survivors by visiting a military personnel office on any military base. (The Air Force/ANG now calls the personnel office the Force Support Squadron (FSS)).

1. The deceased retiree's ID card will need to be turned in. (An original death certificate will be required to accomplish this.) Also, the surviving spouse and authorized family members need to obtain new ID cards.
2. Make necessary changes in the DEERS records. (This is important to ensure your TriCare medical benefits are available). To access your DEERS records you can call, go on-line or visit a personnel office on any military base. (1-800-538-9552, www.tricare.mil/deers) To call for an appointment at a military base in Southern Arizona contact DMAFB at (520) 228-4425, the 162nd at (520) 295-7299, or the Army post at Ft. Huachuca at (520) 533-1608.

Note: Always ask the person in charge if there are any other items that need to be addressed.

Additional items. The following items also need to be accomplished. (Note: Your situation may also include other important items that you personally will need to address.)

1. Surviving spouse needs to update any existing Will or Trust.
2. Credit cards in the deceased's name should be destroyed and/or cancelled.
3. Information on deeds for all property owned jointly will need to be updated.

Note: Though many of the required procedures can be resolved by the survivors themselves, by phone or through personal contact with a survivor benefits representative, some estates possess items that may require probate to resolve disposition of assets. If survivors are not able to accomplish all procedures on their own, professional legal advice may be required to complete the process and settle the estate.

Another option. There is another organization that can assist to help resolve military and VA survivor benefits issues. The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services is a state run organization with offices located statewide that can assist with benefits. The Tucson office is at 1661 N. Swan, Suite 128, in the complex on the southwest corner of Swan and Pima. Call them at (520) 207-4960 for information and guidance. A visit to the local office will be necessary. Take the following documents with you when you go:

1. DD 214 - confirms military service. (If no DD 214 is available, take an NGB 22)
2. Marriage certificate - proves the deceased was your spouse.
3. Death certificate.
4. Proof of spouse's personal income, if any. This can be a pay stub, income tax forms, etc.