



Tribute

WHEN A VETERAN PASSES AWAY:

A Planning Guide for the Surviving Family



*Produced by: Vietnam Veterans of America - New York State Council and
The New York State Tribute Foundation, Inc., an affiliate of the New York State Funeral Directors Association, Inc.*

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WHEN A VETERAN PASSES AWAY

One of the more difficult tasks a survivor may face after the death of a beloved veteran is identifying, securing and completing the numerous claims forms to obtain VA survivors' benefits. The anxiety and fear of the unknown — who to call, what to do, or where to go for help — can be a daunting experience.

To avoid such a situation, and to ensure that those who have proudly served our nation take advantage of all the benefits to which they are entitled, veterans and their families are encouraged to organize their personal and military records as part of regular estate planning. While your funeral director can assist you with the necessary paperwork, gathering and storing these important documents *now* will help ease the burden and be helpful to your family at the time of need.

Veterans of the United States armed forces may be eligible for a broad range of programs and services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service under other than dishonorable conditions. Reservists and National Guard members, as well as their spouses and dependent children, may also be eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits if they were entitled to retirement pay at the time of death, or would have been if they had been over age 60.





IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

The following documents will be needed when applying for benefits related to a veteran's death:

- ▶ Veteran's discharge certificate (DD Form 214) or DD Form 1300 "Report of Casualty" (provided by your Service Casualty Office)
- ▶ Veteran's Social Security number
- ▶ Veteran's Death Certificate (if the veteran did not die in a VA healthcare facility)
- ▶ Veteran's Birth Certificate (to determine parents' benefits)
- ▶ Marriage Certificate
- ▶ Divorce Decree(s) (if any)
- ▶ Each child's birth certificate, adoption and/or custody documents
- ▶ Social Security Numbers/Cards for all family members
- ▶ Wills and Deeds of Trust
- ▶ Government life insurance policies

FEDERAL (VA) VETERANS' BURIAL BENEFITS

The VA offers certain benefits and services to honor America's deceased veterans. These include:

- ▶ **Burial in a VA National Cemetery** — eligible veterans, their spouses and dependents can be buried in a VA National Cemetery at no cost to the family.
- ▶ **Headstones and Markers** — eligible veterans are provided a headstone or marker at no cost.
- ▶ **Presidential Memorial Certificates** — issued upon request to recognize the military service of honorably discharged deceased veterans.
- ▶ **Military Funeral Honors** — at the family's request, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) will provide military funeral honors consisting of folding and presentation of the US flag and the playing of "Taps".
- ▶ **Burial Flags** — Funeral directors will provide an American flag, made available by the VA, to drape an eligible veteran's casket.
- ▶ **Reimbursement of Burial Expenses** — Generally, the VA will pay a burial allowance up to \$2,000 if the veteran's death is service-related. For certain other veterans, the VA will pay a \$300 burial and funeral allowance and a \$150 plot allowance.



BURIAL IN A NATIONAL (VA) CEMETERY

All members of the armed forces and veterans who have met minimum active service duty requirements and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable are eligible for burial in a National (VA) Cemetery. A veteran's spouse, widow/widower, minor children, and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children, may also be eligible for burial; eligible spouses and children may be buried, even if they pre-decease the veteran. (Note: Surviving spouses of veterans who died on or after January 1, 2000, do not lose eligibility for burial in a national cemetery if they remarry.) Burial options are limited to those available at a specific cemetery but may include in-ground casket, or interment of cremated remains in a columbarium, in ground or in a scatter garden.

Your funeral director will work with the National Cemetery Scheduling Office to make burial arrangements.

► NATIONAL CEMETERIES IN NEW YORK STATE

- ▶ **Bath National Cemetery**
Bath
- ▶ **Calverton National Cemetery**
Calverton
- ▶ **Woodlawn National Cemetery****
Elmira
- ▶ **Long Island National Cemetery****
Farmingdale
- ▶ **Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery**
Schuylerville

***These cemeteries have space available for cremated remains in a columbarium only. However, casketed remains of subsequent family members in the same gravesite of previously interred family members can be accommodated.*

► HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

Upon request, the VA will provide a government headstone or marker for the grave of any deceased eligible Veteran in any cemetery around the world at no charge. (Note: Headstones and markers are provided for eligible spouses and dependents of Veterans only in a national, military post/base or state Veterans cemetery; spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery are not eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker.)

For burials in a National Cemetery, a National Cemetery representative will assist the next-of-kin or authorized representative in ordering the headstone or marker. For burials in a private cemetery the next-of-kin or authorized representative may apply for a headstone or marker at the time of burial; your funeral director can assist you in obtaining the appropriate application form.



PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATES

A Presidential Memorial Certificate honors the memory of honorably discharged deceased veterans. The next of kin and loved ones of a deceased veteran are eligible to request a certificate. A copy of the deceased veteran's military discharge document along with a photocopy of the death certificate must be provided when requesting a certificate.

Requests for a Presidential Memorial Certificate may be made via phone, 202-565-4259, or in person at any VA Regional Office:

Buffalo Regional Office
130 South Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14202
800-827-1000

New York Regional Office
245 W Houston Street
New York, NY 10014
800-827-1000

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

"Honoring Those Who Served" is the national program for providing dignified military funeral honors to veterans who have defended our nation. Upon the family's request, every eligible veteran may receive a military funeral honors ceremony, to include folding and presenting the United States burial flag and the playing of Taps. A military funeral honors detail will consist of two or more uniformed military persons, with at least one being a member of the veteran's parent service of the armed forces; veterans' service organizations or volunteer groups may help provide honors.

Your funeral director will request military funeral honors on behalf of the veteran's family from either the U.S. DOD, NYS Division of Military and Naval Affairs (DMNA) or the NY National Guard. It is important to advise your funeral director immediately if a Military Honors Ceremony is desired because it often takes 48 hours to process and implement a request for such services.

BURIAL FLAGS

A United States flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who honorably served in the U. S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a veteran's military service to his or her country. Generally, the flag is given to the next-of-kin, as a keepsake, at the conclusion of the funeral service following its use.

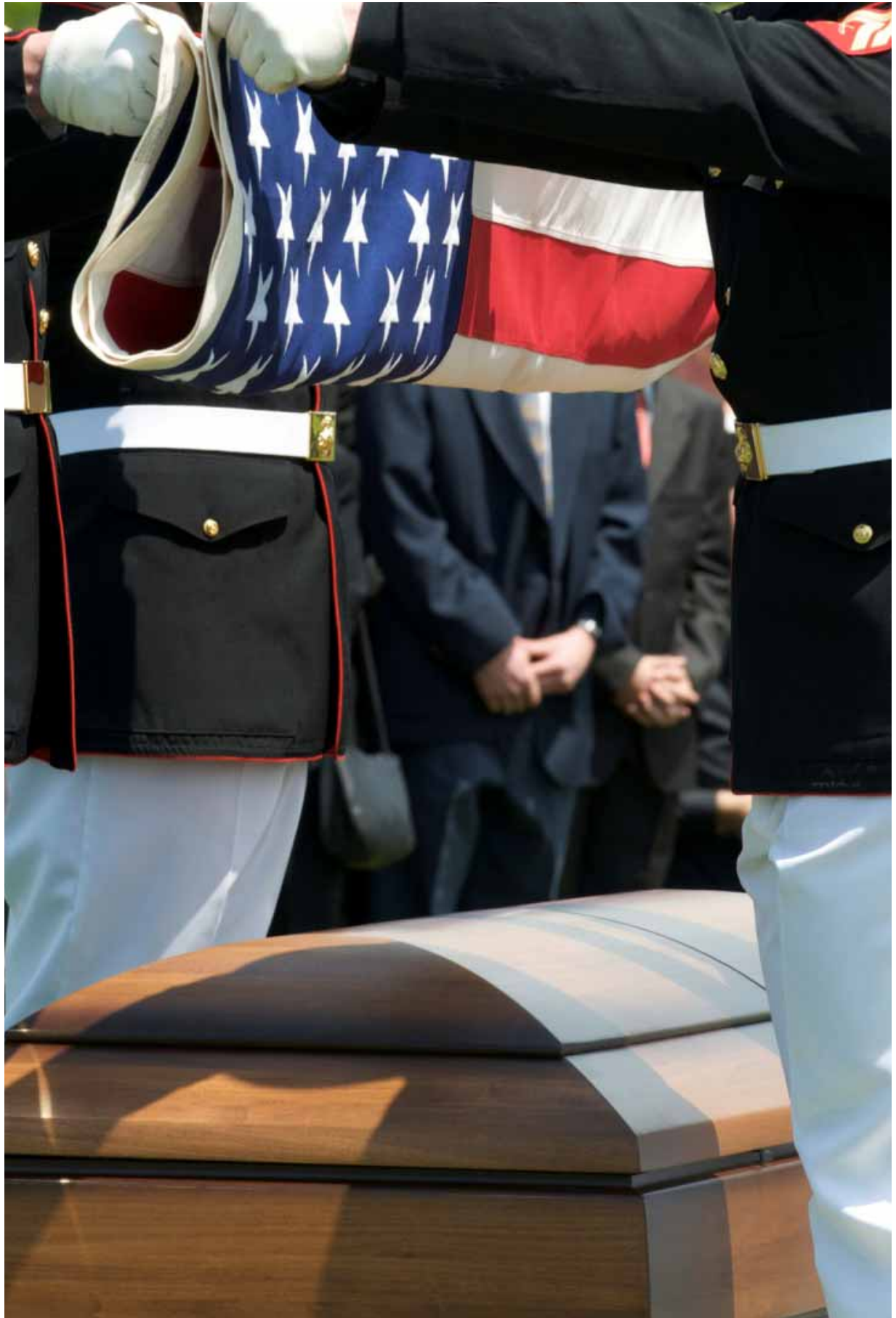
Your funeral director will assist you in obtaining a flag from your regional VA office or local U.S. Post Office.

REIMBURSEMENT OF BURIAL EXPENSES

If the veteran's death was service-related, the VA will pay up to \$2,000 toward burial expenses for deaths on or after September 11, 2001. VA will pay up to \$1,500 for deaths prior to September 10, 2001. If the veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery, some or all of the cost of transporting the veteran's remains may be reimbursed. There is no time limit for filing reimbursement claims in service-connected death cases.

If the death was non-service-related, the VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses and a \$300 plot-interment allowance for deaths on or after December 1, 2001. The plot-interment allowance is \$150 for deaths prior to December 1, 2001. If the death happened while the veteran was in a VA hospital or under VA contracted nursing home care, some or all of the costs for transporting the veteran's remains may be reimbursed. *In non-service-related death cases, claims must be filed within two years of burial or cremation.*

To apply for reimbursement of burial expenses, complete VA Form 21-530 (Application for Burial Benefits), which is available for download at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>. You will need to attach a copy of the veteran's military discharge document (DD 214 or equivalent), death certificate, and funeral and burial bills marked "paid in full."





NEW YORK STATE VETERANS' BENEFITS

Supplemental Burial Allowance

New York State's supplemental burial allowance provides a maximum payment of \$6,000 to defray funeral and burial expenses for members of the armed forces who were residents of NYS and who were killed in combat or while on active duty in hostile/imminent danger locations on or after September 29, 2003.

Applications for this burial allowance must be received within two years of burial or cremation.

Burial of Veterans and Their Families

New York State may also make burial arrangements and provide headstones for veterans and certain family members who are unable to pay for their funeral expenses.



COUNTY BENEFITS

Benefits vary with each county in New York State. *Check with your County Veterans' Service Agency.*

<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>PHONE</u>	<u>WEB ADDRESS</u>
▶ Albany County	518-447-7710	http://bit.ly/AlbanyCoVSA
▶ Allegany County	585-268-9387 x 387	http://bit.ly/AlleganyCoVSA
▶ Broome County	607-778-2147	http://bit.ly/BroomeCoVSA
▶ Cattaraugus County	716-701-3298 x 3298	http://bit.ly/CattaraugusCoVSA
▶ Cayuga County	315-253-1281	http://bit.ly/CayugaCoVSA
▶ Chautauqua County	716-661-8255	http://bit.ly/ChautauquaCoVSA
▶ Chemung County	607-737-5445	http://bit.ly/ChemungCoVSA
▶ Chenango County	607-336-6807	No Web Site
▶ Clinton County	518-565-4720	http://bit.ly/ClintonCoVSA
▶ Columbia County	518-828-0513	No Web Site
▶ Cortland County	607-753-5014	http://bit.ly/CortlandCoVSA
▶ Delaware County	607-746-2334	http://bit.ly/DelawareCoVSA
▶ Dutchess County	845-486-2060	http://bit.ly/DutchessCoVSA
▶ Erie County	716-858-6363	http://bit.ly/ErieCoVSA
▶ Essex County	No County VSA	No Web Site
▶ Franklin County	518-481-1538	No Web Site
▶ Fulton County	518-773-3401	http://bit.ly/FultonCoVSA
▶ Genesee County	585-343-8216	http://bit.ly/GeneseeCoVSA
▶ Greene County	518-943-3703	veterans@discovergreene.com
▶ Hamilton County	518-548-6651 or 648-5211	No Web Site
▶ Herkimer County	315-867-1127	http://bit.ly/HerkimerCoVSA
▶ Jefferson County	315-785-3086	http://bit.ly/JeffersonCoVSA
▶ Lewis County	315-376-5316	http://bit.ly/LewisCoVSA
▶ Livingston County	585-243-7960	http://bit.ly/LivingstonCoVSA
▶ Madison County	315-366-2395	http://bit.ly/MadisonCoVSA
▶ Monroe County	585-753-6040	http://bit.ly/MonroeCoVSA
▶ Montgomery County	518-853-8152	No Web Site
▶ Nassau County	516-572-8452	http://bit.ly/NassauCoVSA

▶ Niagara County	716-438-4090	http://bit.ly/NiagaraCoVSA
▶ Oneida County	315-798-5830	http://bit.ly/OneidaCoVSA
▶ Onondaga County	315-435-3217	http://bit.ly/OnondagaCoVSA
▶ Ontario County	585-396-4185	http://bit.ly/OntarioCoVSA
▶ Orange County	845-291-2470	http://bit.ly/OrangeCoVSA
▶ Orleans County	585-589-3219	http://bit.ly/OrleansCoVSA
▶ Oswego County	315-591-9100	http://bit.ly/OswegoCoVSA
▶ Otsego County	607-547-4224	http://bit.ly/OtsegoCoVSA
▶ Putnam County	845-225-2260	No Web Site
▶ Rensselaer County	518-270-2760	http://bit.ly/RensCoVSA
▶ Rockland County	845-638-5244	http://bit.ly/RocklandCoVSA
▶ St. Lawrence County	315-386-4754	http://bit.ly/StLawCoVSA
▶ Saratoga County	518-884-4115	http://bit.ly/SaratogaCoVSA
▶ Schenectady County	518-377-2738	No Web Site
▶ Schoharie County	518-295-8304	http://bit.ly/SchoharieCoVSA
▶ Schuyler County	607-535-2091	http://bit.ly/SchuylerCoVSA
▶ Seneca County	315-539-1798	http://bit.ly/SenecaCoVSA
▶ Steuben County	607-664-2198	http://bit.ly/SteubenCoVSA
▶ Suffolk County	631-853-8387	http://bit.ly/SuffolkCoVSA
▶ Sullivan County	845-807-0233	http://bit.ly/SullivanCoVSA
▶ Tioga County	607-687-8228	http://bit.ly/TiogaCoVSA
▶ Tompkins County	No County VSA	No Web Site
▶ Ulster County	845-340-3190	http://bit.ly/UlsterCoVSA
▶ Warren County	518-761-6342	http://bit.ly/WarrenCoVSA
▶ Washington County	518-746-2470	http://bit.ly/WashCoVSA
▶ Wayne County	315-946-5993	http://bit.ly/WayneCoVSA
▶ Westchester County	914-995-2145	http://bit.ly/WestchesterCoVSA
▶ Wyoming County	585-786-8860	http://bit.ly/WyomingCoVSA
▶ Yates County	315-536-5196	http://bit.ly/YatesCoVSA

► MISCELLANEOUS BENEFITS

Veteran Administration service representatives can answer questions about benefits eligibility and application procedures. A veteran's family may be entitled to benefits such as:

1. Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for spouse or dependent child(ren)
2. Death Pension for spouse or dependent child(ren)
3. VA Burial Benefits
4. National Service VA Life Insurance

Contact the nearest VA benefits office at 800-827-1000 or the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs (DVA) at 888-838-7697 for more information.

► VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS

If your loved one was a member of a veterans' organization, such as the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), or Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), ask your funeral director to contact the organization's service representative to arrange for a ritual service and casket bearers. The post representative should also be informed if the family wishes to have the flag presented to the next-of-kin during the graveside service.

▶ BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING

The VA offers bereavement counseling to parents, spouses and children of Armed Forces personnel who died in the service of their country. Family members of reservists and National Guard personnel who die while on duty are also eligible for this program. VA's bereavement counseling is provided at no cost in community-based Vet Centers located near the family or can oftentimes be made available in the family's home or where the family feels most comfortable. *Families may request this service by calling 202-273-9116 or via email at vet.center@va.gov.*

▶ MILITARY RECORDS

Veterans and next-of-kin of deceased veterans have the same rights to full access to military records. Next-of-kin are the widow or widower who has not remarried, son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister of the deceased veteran. You may now use vetrecs.archives.gov to order a copy of your military records.

▶ TIMING IS IMPORTANT

Any claim for VA benefits should be filed as promptly as possible to insure the earliest effective date of awarding benefits. There is no specific time limit for claiming reimbursement of burial expenses for a service-related death. In other cases, claims must be filed within two (2) years of the veteran's burial.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES . . .

Important Phone Numbers

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| ‣ NYS Funeral Directors Association | 800-291-2629 |
| ‣ NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) | 888-838-7697 |
| ‣ VA (US Department of Veterans Affairs) Hotline | 800-827-1000 |
| ‣ Telecommunication Device for the Deaf | 800-829-4833 |
| ‣ Bereavement Counseling | 202-461-6530 |

Important Web Sites

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ‣ VVA-NY State Council | www.nyvietnamvets.org |
| ‣ NYS Funeral Directors Association | www.nysfda.org |
| ‣ NYS Division of Veterans' Affairs | www.veterans.ny.gov |
| ‣ US Department of Veterans Affairs | www.va.gov |
| ‣ VA Burial and Memorial Benefits | www.cem.va.gov |
| ‣ VA Forms | www.va.gov/vaforms |





VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA



A dedicated group of Vietnam veterans founded Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) in 1978. It is the only national Vietnam veterans' organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle:

"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA — NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL (VVA-NYSC)



VVA-NYSC promotes and supports the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans, to create a new identity for this generation of veterans, and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans. Our programs aggressively advocate on issues important to veterans, seek full access to quality health care for veterans, and identify the full range of disabling injuries and illnesses incurred during military service. We hold government agencies accountable for following laws mandating veterans' health care, create a positive public perception of Vietnam veterans, seek the fullest possible accounting of America's POW/MIAs, support the next generation of America's war veterans, and serve our communities. VVA-NYSC oversees 39 VVA Chapters across New York State.

NEW YORK STATE TRIBUTE FOUNDATION, INC.



The Tribute Foundation was established to advance awareness related to death, dying and bereavement by fostering a better understanding of end-of-life issues for all New Yorkers and offering support to community members in everyday situations and during times of crisis. Committed to being an agent of change, the Foundation works creatively to define issues, provide a forum to exchange ideas and be a resource for information. Its philanthropic vision is guided by its investments in consumer education and outreach, industry research, education for lifelong learning, and partnerships and collaborations.

NEW YORK STATE FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION, INC. (NYSFDA)



NYSFDA is the oldest association of funeral directors in the United States. Comprised of over 900 funeral firms employing more than 3500 licensed funeral directors, NYSFDA is the largest organization representing the interests of large and small funeral firms in New York State. NYSFDA is the nationally recognized leader of state funeral directors associations in the country, and is headquartered in Albany, New York.