



Know Your PADD Rights

Funeral/Memorial Services

Funeral/memorial services are deeply personal events to honor a service member's life and service. As the person authorized to direct disposition of remains for a service member, you will arrange for the funeral/memorial service and may seek reimbursement for authorized expenses up to the maximum allowance provided by the military department. You will also receive round-trip transportation to attend the funeral/memorial service.

Your casualty assistance officer will assist with arranging military funeral honors (eligibility is determined at the time of request by the military department). If you are not already the primary or next of kin eligible to receive a burial flag, as the PADD, you will receive an interment flag, presented by the honor guard, at the funeral/memorial service.

For additional resources, visit:

- Survivor's Guide to Benefits at: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/products/a-survivors-guide-to-benefits-taking-care-of-our-families-149>
- Funeral and Burial Benefits for Service Members at: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/gold-star-surviving-family/survivor-finances-and-legal/funeral-and-burial-benefits-for-service-members>
- Burial at Sea: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-life-cycle/veterans-military-funeral-honors/burial-at-sea>

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**This Defense Department guide is for
the designated person authorized to direct
disposition of a service member's remains.**



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This guide outlines your rights and the decisions you will make as the designated person authorized to direct disposition of remains for a service member who died while serving in an active-duty status.

What is a PADD?

A PADD is someone designated by a service member on their DD Form 93, "Record of Emergency Data," or designated by law if a service member did not designate a person to make decisions regarding the preparation and disposition of their human remains. Being selected to serve as a PADD means a service member entrusts you with this special responsibility. You are not asked to make decisions alone; you should talk to family members, clergy and your chosen funeral service professional about decisions on preparation and final disposition.

The PADD's responsibilities include:

- Making decisions related to the preparation and transportation of the service member's remains
- Determining the service member's final resting place
- Choosing the type of services to commemorate their life and service to our country

As the PADD, you have the right to:

- Relinquish your PADD designation.
- Be notified in a timely manner of the service member's death and receive updates.
- Be provided updates on recovery efforts when search and recovery operations are ongoing.
- Receive a briefing from a casualty assistance or mortuary affairs officer regarding preparation and transportation of remains, disposition options and military funeral honors.
- Request chaplain support.
- Select the funeral home of your choice.
- Direct how to prepare the remains. Do you want the remains embalmed or prepared without embalming? If you choose not to embalm, it may impact your ability to have a public viewing and may impact transportation options. Do you want the remains dressed in military uniform or in civilian attire?
- Select type of casket or urn (if applicable).
- View the remains.
- Direct final disposition, which may include in-ground burial, placement in a mausoleum, cremation, placement in a niche, scattering of the cremated remains, etc.
- Request a second autopsy. You may contract with a local civil authority or private pathologist to conduct an autopsy. All expenses pertaining to the second autopsy are a personal expense and not reimbursable by the Defense Department. It's the responsibility of the person requesting the autopsy to arrange the transportation of the remains to the place of the second autopsy, including complying with all civil laws and obtaining all required transportation and burial permits.

Viewing Service Member Remains

The preparing funeral director or government mortician will make a recommendation about whether the remains should be viewed. This is only a recommendation and does not remove the right to make a choice on viewing the remains at the receiving funeral home. You can seek guidance from your chosen funeral service professional and/or clergy regarding any decision to view when remains have been designated as nonviewable. Keep in mind that emotional trauma or post-traumatic stress may result from viewing remains that are not recommended for viewing.

If the service member's remains are recommended nonviewable, they will be prepared using a head wrap or a full body wrap. For severe facial trauma, the head is wrapped in gauze, and the service member is dressed in uniform. When there has been significant trauma to the body or in cases of severe decomposition, the preparing funeral director or government mortician may choose to wrap the remains in a full body wrap. A full body wrap is when the service member's remains are wrapped in layers of cotton, plastic sheeting, a white sheet and secured with a military blanket. Once the remains are placed into the casket, the appropriate service dress uniform is fastened over them so that when the casket is open, the family is able to feel the decedent's remains beneath the uniform. Both the head wrap and the full body wrap allow for an open-casket viewing. If remains were prepared with a head wrap or a full body wrap, you can have the remains unwrapped and view them in a private setting.