

Caring for Veterans Through the End Of Life

Resource Toolkit

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This curriculum is made possible
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Vietnam Veteran and his family.

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Introduction

Honoring our Veterans through the end of their lives is not only a solemn duty but a profound privilege. Our Nation's Veterans have risked their lives to protect our freedoms, and they deserve the utmost respect and care as they approach the end of their journey.

As we approach the end of life, our needs and priorities shift, and this is particularly true for Veterans. For many Veterans, the end of life can be a time of reflection, coming to terms with their service and sacrifice, and seeking closure and healing. However, it can also be a time of physical and emotional pain, facing difficult decisions about medical treatment and end-of-life care and navigating complex systems of care and support.

That is why this Resource Toolkit was designed to provide communities, caregivers, and healthcare providers with the information and resources needed to support our Veterans through the end of their lives with compassion, dignity, and respect. In these pages, you will find valuable resources to help you navigate this journey and honor the legacy of our Veterans. So, whether you are a community member seeking to create a culture of understanding and support, a caregiver or loved one caring for a Veteran, or a healthcare provider looking to enhance your knowledge and skills in serving Veterans, this toolkit is for you.

We hope this toolkit will inspire you to embrace the challenge and privilege of supporting our Veterans through the end of their lives and see this journey as an opportunity to honor their service and sacrifice, deepen our humanity, and find hope and meaning amid grief and loss. Thank you for joining us in this important work.

* While our list is not all-inclusive, we have listed several of the larger organizations that will likely have a presence in your state or local community on the following pages.

Hospice and Palliative Care

Hospice and palliative care services can provide vital support to veterans and their loved ones. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers hospice and palliative care services to eligible Veterans, and community hospice organizations may also offer specialized care for Veterans.

Hospice Foundation of America

www.hospicefoundation.org

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

<https://www.nhpco.org/>



Veteran Service Organizations

Veteran service organizations (VSOs) are a great resource for communities to connect with Veterans and their loved ones. Many VSOs offer end-of-life support and resources, including bereavement support groups and counseling services.

The American Legion

www.legion.org

Disabled American Veterans

www.dav.org

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

www.iava.org

Minority Veterans of America

www.minorityvets.org

National Association for Black Veterans

www.nabvets.org

Veterans of Foreign Wars

www.vfw.org

Vietnam Veterans of America

www.vva.org



Education and Awareness

Education and awareness are critical to building a supportive community for Veterans. Community organizations can host events or workshops to educate members on Veterans' unique needs and challenges and provide information on available resources.

End of Life University

www.eoluniversity.com

PsychArmor

<https://psycharmor.org>

We Honor Veterans- a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

<https://www.wehonorveterans.org>



Caregiver Support

Caregiver support services include counseling, education, and respite care. Caregivers can also connect with local support groups or seek out respite care through community organizations.

American Red Cross- Military and Veteran Caregiver Network

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html>

Family Caregiver Alliance

<https://www.caregiver.org>

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation

<https://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org>

Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers

<https://www.rosalynncarter.org>

Help Texts

<https://helptexts.com/>

Grief and Bereavement Support

The loss of a Veteran can be particularly difficult for loved ones. Bereavement support services, including counseling and support groups, can help caregivers and family members navigate the grieving process.

Military OneSource

www.militaryonesource.com

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

www.taps.org

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org/>





VA Resources

The VA offers a variety of resources for healthcare providers, including palliative care and hospice resources, training programs, and clinical practice guidelines.

Department of Veterans Affairs

www.va.gov

Veteran Benefits Information

www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/

Burial and Memorial Benefits

www.cem.va.gov

Planning Your Legacy: VA Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/docs/VASurvivorsKit.pdf>

National Cemetery Administration

www.cem.va.gov

National Center for PTSD

www.ptsd.va.gov

VA Caregiver Support

www.caregiver.va.gov

VA Palliative Care

https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICAL/pages/Palliative_Care.asp

VA Hospice Care

https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/pages/Hospice_Care.asp

Vet Centers

www.vetcenter.va.gov



Conversations with Children

Protecting our children doesn't mean shielding them from the reality of death. Instead, it means empowering them with the knowledge and tools they need to navigate this difficult time with grace, compassion, and resilience.

Suggestions for How to Protect Children During This Journey

- 1. Be honest and transparent:** Children can often sense when something is wrong. So, it is essential to be honest with them about what's happening and to answer their questions directly and age-appropriately.
- 2. Create a safe and supportive environment:** This means providing them with a safe space to express their emotions and offering them the love, comfort, and support they need to heal as they navigate their grief.
- 3. Involve them in the process:** Involving them can help them feel more in control. Allow them to spend time with the Veteran (as often as possible). It could include reading stories and looking at photos together. Allow them to make memories! Let children be as creative as possible and maybe create Memory Boxes for the Veteran.
- 4. Offer them coping tools:** This could include journaling, art therapy, or other creative outlets that allow them to express their emotions safely and healthily.
- 5. Seek out support:** This could mean connecting with a grief counselor, joining a support group, or connecting with friends and family for help.



Resources for Children

Sesame Street: Helping Kids Grieve

<https://sesameworkshop.org/resources/helping-kids-grieve/>

The Memory Box: A Book About Grief by Joanna Rowland

<https://www.amazon.com/Memory-Box-Book-About-Grief/dp/1506426727>

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf by Leo Buscaglia

<https://www.amazon.com/Fall-Freddie-Leaf-Story-Life/dp/0943432898>

How I Feel: Grief Journal for Kids: Guided Prompts to Explore Your Feelings and Find Peace by Mia Roldan LCSW LCDC

<https://a.co/d/bcU0oyt>

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

<https://www.amazon.com/Kissing-Hand-Audrey-Penn/dp/1933718102>

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