



MY PERSONAL AFFAIRS (FOR RETIREES)

Provided by:

30TH Force Support Squadron
Military and Family Readiness Center
Casualty Affairs
706 Washington Ave Bldg. 10122 Room 116
Vandenberg, CA 93437

Air Force Personnel Casualty Assistance Finder toll-free at	1-877 353-6807
Vandenberg Casualty Assistance Office.....	1-805-605-2029
Defense Finance and Acct Service (DFAS) –Retired/Annuitant Pay.....	1-800-321-1080
Social Security Administration:	1-800-772-1213
Department of Veterans Affairs	1-800-827-1000

WE ASSIST ALL BRANCHES!

Version 1 2
Mr. Jose Duenas, DAFC
30 FSS/FSH

Greetings Retirees,

My name is Jose Duenas, and I am the Casualty Assistance Representative at Vandenberg Space Force Base.

In addition to assisting the loved ones of our Active Duty fallen, I also assist survivors of military retirees of all branches in applying for all benefits to which they may be entitled and can advise on other services available.

One of the most important things you can do to minimize stress for your loved ones is to make sure your personal affairs are in order and to have your loved ones reach out to me as soon as possible upon your death. Please use this booklet as a tool to assist you in managing your personal affairs. Another important thing you must do is to know what benefits are available to you while you are living and ensure that your loved ones know the benefits available to them after you die.

Please consider the following while getting your personal affairs in order:

Survivor Benefit Plan

Did you enroll in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) when you retired? Does your spouse know? Did you know that if your spouse does not apply within six years following your death that they lose the benefit under the *Barring Act*?

Veterans Affairs

Have you applied for VA Service-Connected Disability Compensation? Many benefits like VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (monthly tax-free payment to surviving spouse) and service-connected burial reimbursement are contingent on your death being caused by a service-connected disability (typically either as a primary or contributing cause)? Many non-VA and DOD Federal and State benefits require that you be rated at a certain level.

Do you have a copy of your VA claims file? Do you have a copy of your service medical and personnel records? The mentioned records will be of value when your spouse applies for VA survivor benefits. Although these records should be on file with VA and/or the National Archives, important records like these have been lost in fires or in VA facilities.

Were you ever denied VA disability compensation? Did you know the laws have been liberalized on *many* occasions and you may now qualify? Just because you were denied benefits 20 years ago, doesn't mean you will be denied today. For example, a recent law change allows for *any* Veteran who served honorably for 90 days or more to draw 100 percent disability for Lou Gehrig's disease –no causation need even be shown.

Have you registered for VA healthcare? You should. Although you are eligible for Tricare, VA can cover some things that Tricare can't (examples: hearing aids, certain home adaptation grants, possible long-term care, caregiver support stipends, etc.). These benefits may make a difference as to whether you must liquidate your estate to pay for long-term care and debts. The use of Tricare does not preclude you from registering for VA –the only thing the VA typically requires is that you show up once a year for a wellness check. Registration into the VA in the last days of life can significantly reduce the amount of services available to you and your loved ones and end up

costing you more money out of pocket. Enroll early.

Legal Issues

Do you have a will or trust? Do you have an advanced directive? Do your loved ones know where they are? Did you or your loved one know that you are entitled to legal assistance at the base legal office?

Insurance

Do you have life insurance? If so, ensure your beneficiary information is up to date and that the beneficiaries are aware of how to obtain proceeds.

Civil Service

Did you perform Civil Service after your retired? Is your spouse eligible for annuity or FEGLI payout? Did you pay in the Thrift Savings Plan? Does he/she know?

Documentation

Do you have *all* your marriage certificates and divorce decrees? **The payment of Federal benefits can be delayed or outright denied if these are requested and not provided in a timely manner.**

The Takeaway: Call or come see me if you have questions! Ensure your loved ones notify me after you die so I can ensure no stone goes unturned as it pertains to benefits and resources. Thank you for your service to our country!

Very Respectfully,

Jose Duenas
Casualty Assistance Representative
Airman and Family Readiness Center
706 Washington Ave Bldg. 10122
(805) 605-2029

MY PERSONAL AFFAIRS RECORD

(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Name)

(Social Security Number) (Rank) (Date of Retirement)

(Current Address)

(Home Phone) (Date of Birth) (Place of Birth)

(Spouse's Last Name) (Spouses Maiden Name) (First Name) (Middle Name)

(Social Security Number) (Date of Birth) (Place of Birth)

(Date of Marriage) (Place of Marriage)

Number of marriages for member _____ Number of marriages for spouse _____

If previously married ensure you have their name, date of marriage, place of marriage (city/state), date of divorce, place of divorce (city/state).

CHILDREN:

(Name)

(Social Security Number) (Date of Birth) (Place of Birth)

(Name)

(Social Security Number) (Date of Birth) (Place of Birth)

(Name)

(Social Security Number)

(Date of Birth)

(Place of Birth)

RETIREE'S PARENTS (if living)

(Name)

(Social Security Number)

(Date of Birth)

(Place of Birth)

(Name)

(Social Security Number)

(Date of Birth)

(Place of Birth)

In order to make this difficult time a little easier, it would help your family if you would have the following certified documents together in one place and easily accessible. Another good idea would be to have these documents in a non-flammable box, either at home or in a safe deposit box. If you keep these documents under lock and key, please ensure your spouse knows where the key is or has the combination to the lock.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

- **DD 214 (s)**
- **Birth Certificates** (or other proof of birth for yourself and each family member)
- **Marriage Certificate**
- **Social Security Card**
- **Divorce decree/Death certificates** of all previous marriages (for both spouses if applicable) -- (often Federal benefits are delayed when the retiree or spouse does not have these of record)
- **Adoption Papers**
- **Naturalization papers**
- **Retirement Order**
- **Reserve/Guard retiree – “20-year letter” – Air National Guard – NGB 22**
- **Will**
- **Most recent Retiree Pay Statement**
- **Copy of your VA Claims file**
Copy of your Military Personnel and Medical Records
- **Copy of all VA benefits-related correspondence you have received, to include disability Rating Decisions**

Note: Make every effort to retain “original” documents (Provide certified copies whenever possible)

The following information will also be useful to your spouse:

Copies of our federal and state income tax returns are located _____

Copies of our mortgage papers are located _____

Civil Service OPM Information (888) 767-6738 (Federal Employee Survivor Benefits/Insurance)

CSA #: _____

Thrift Savings Plan Account Number(s) 1-877-968-3778

Civilian:

Military:

Beneficiary Information updated/confirmed on: _____

Veterans' Affairs Data (if applicable)

Disability claim# _____

% Disabled: _____ Date Disability Rating: _____

List of Service-Connected Disabilities:

VA Life Insurance policy Nr(s):

File Nr: _____

Type: _____

Amount \$ _____

Location of policies _____

Any known paid-up additional VA insurance \$ _____

As of Date _____

Other Remarks:

At the time of retirement, did you elect Survivor Benefit Program? Yes No

If yes, was it Spouse Spouse & Child Other: _____

SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN (SBP) – The Uniformed Services Survivor Benefit Plan was created by Congress in 1972 and is the sole means by which survivors can receive a portion of military retired pay (55% of base amount), without it retired pay stops on the date of the retiree's death. SBP provides an eligible surviving spouse or former spouse financial security like the financial security a retiree has with retired pay a cost of living adjusted monthly income for life.

**Bank Accounts (Include Credit Union, Savings & Loan Association, IRA, TSP and 401(k)
(it is always a good idea to have beneficiaries identified)**

1. Type of account:

(Name/location of bank)	(Account Number)	(Checking/Savings)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Location of passbooks for older savings accounts _____

3. Location of statements and canceled checks for checking accounts: _____

4. Location of Safety Deposit Box: _____

Savings Bonds, Stocks and Securities (Identify Beneficiary):

1. Location of Bonds _____

2. Company to contact: _____

Important Legal Information for Family Use

Will: _____ Attorney: _____

Executor of the Estate: _____

Executor
Address: _____

Vehicle Information – titles, loans etc. information:

Charge Accounts, Credit Cards, Medical Insurance etc. (Place * by those that have insurance protections –e.g. “credit insurance”):

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

(Company Name and Address/Phone Number)

(Account Number)

Life Insurance:

I have life insurance with the following companies:

Insurance Company	Address	Policy Number	Face Value
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

The policies are located _____
_____.

Life Insurance Beneficiary Designations

Beneficiary Designations for each policy were reviewed on this date: _____

Memberships in private associations and organizations:

List below any memberships in private associations or organizations. Sometimes these memberships also carry small life insurance policies that you may have previously overlooked. Some organizations or associations may offer additional assistance to your spouse.

Names, addresses and phone numbers of friends or business associates who may be helpful:

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Civilian Employment:

Many times, after people retire from the military they go on to a second career. These jobs also may contain benefits that will be helpful to your spouse. List below the name, address and phone number of the person(s) your spouse should call at this time.

Occupation: _____
Industry _____

Employer: _____ Position Held:

How Long: _____ Retired: _____

Residence, Cities, Years:

Education:

Military Service: WWII [] Korea [] Post-1955 Peacetime [] Vietnam Era 1964-1975 []
Gulf War Era 1990 to current []

Other: _____

Branch: _____ Rate or Rank: _____ Service Number: _____

Enlisted Date and Place:

Discharge/Retirement Date & Place:

Funeral and Burial Arrangements:

At the time of your death your loved ones should not have to be concerned with making funeral decisions. This is something that should be discussed well in advance. I've added this page in hopes that you will take a minute to sit down with your family and discuss what you would want done at this time. Let them know that this booklet will be available to them and where it is located. (We recommend not putting this booklet in a safe deposit box. These are decisions the funeral home will need right away and many times your spouse will not be able to wait until Monday morning when the bank opens.)

1. Funeral Home _____
(Name) (Phone Number)

What type of interment do you want? Burial or Cremation? Circle One

Is there anything special you want to be buried in or a type of URN? Describe

If cremation is desired you may want to contact the funeral director for instructions. Each state is different when it comes to their requirements. Some may require a signed letter from the deceased of their cremation wishes. This letter could be attached to this booklet. The same is true for being buried at sea. Request you inquire on these things now to save your loved ones any future grief.

2. Church and Clergy: Based on your religious beliefs, a clergyman may be either essential, or merely of assistance. You may want to consult with a clergyman before making funeral arrangements.

(Clergyman) (Church phone number)

(Address) (Home phone number)

We suggest you fill in the following, which will help your next-of-kin:

Name of Cemetery: _____ Phone: _____

Do you want a military ceremony and honors? If so contact your local honor guard:

Where is your Service Dress Uniform and is it ready? _____

Hymns, Psalms, Scripture or Special Requests _____

Pallbearers:	Names	Phone Numbers
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Flowers (in lieu of flowers): _____

5. Obituary Notice: A draft obituary will be helpful, and a photo should be included. (Use additional page if necessary)

6. Memorials and remembrances:

7. Newspaper: (The funeral home typically notifies the local newspaper)

If you are considering a burial in a VA National Cemetery, State Veterans Cemetery, or Arlington National Cemetery, the following numbers may be useful:

- [Arlington National Cemetery](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/).....1-877-907-8585
- [VA National Cemetery Administration](http://www.cem.va.gov/).....1-800-827-1000

**The following phone numbers will be useful to your spouse:
(subject to change)**

- Air Force Personnel Center toll-free at.....877-353-6807
(Call and put in your Zip Code and be connected to the nearest Air Force Casualty Assistance Representative)
- **Vandenberg Casualty Assistance (for help with benefits).....805-605-2029**
- Vandenberg Honor Guard.....805-606-3654
- Vandenberg Chaplain805-606-5773
- Vandenberg Legal Office805-605-6200
- Vandenberg Clinic805-606-2273
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)-Indianapolis800-321-1080
- Social Security (National Number).....1-800-772-1213
- Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Call Center1-800-827-1000
- Department of Veterans Affairs Life Insurance:1-800-669-8477
- Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (for VGLI policies)1-800-419-1473
- TRICARE West.....1-844-866-9378
- Thrift Savings Plan1-877-968-3778

Retiree Death Steps to Take

Contact your Casualty Assistance Representative on 805-605-2029. Be prepared to provide the Social Security Number of the Retiree. The Casualty Assistance Representative will then contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and report the death of the military retiree. This call will STOP the military Retiree pay.

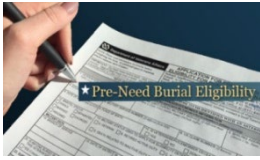
NOTE: If you do not contact an Air Force Casualty Assistance Representative, contact DFAS at 1-800-321-1080. A report of Death must be completed with DFAS, or overpayment of retirement pay will occur

Contact the Social Security Administration at 800-772-1213 (Note: Many times, the funeral home will complete the initial notification to SSA for you). Apply for any SSA benefits you may be eligible for by calling the toll-free number above or by visiting your local SSA Office (the closest to Vandenberg SFB is located in Santa Maria).

Once a copy of the retiree's death certificate is received:

- If you have not already, contact the Vandenberg SFB Casualty Assistance Office at 805-605-2029 after the death certificate has been received to schedule an appointment for a benefits briefing and to complete any applicable application forms.
- The Casualty Assistance Representative will request that you bring all or some of the following documents:
 - Death Certificate (must)
 - If the Survivor Benefit Plan is being applied for, a Voided Check will be needed for the Bank Account SBP will be directly deposited into.
 - Marriage License (if available)
 - Divorce decrees (if available)
 - DD Form(s) 214 (if available)
 - Any VA-related benefits correspondence of record
 - Itemized invoice showing funeral/burial expenses paid in full and by whom

If applying for any Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, the Casualty Assistance Representative will assist you with applications, discuss eligibility criteria, and will put you in contact with your local Veterans Service Officer should you desire VA-accredited representation



Pre-Need Burial Eligibility Determination

DO YOU QUESTION YOUR ELIGIBILITY TO BE BURIED IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY? THEN THIS IS FOR YOU.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented the pre-need burial eligibility determination program to assist anyone who would like to know if they are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. VA is promoting pre-need eligibility determinations to encourage Veterans and their eligible family members to plan in advance to use VA burial benefits that Veterans have earned through their military service. Planning in advance for a Veteran's or loved-one's final resting place can eliminate unnecessary delays and reduce stress on a family at a difficult time. Veteran families will have increased confidence that their loved ones are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery at their time of need.

<https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-10007.pdf>

Upon request VA will make eligibility determinations for burial in a VA national cemetery in advance of need. Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open VA national cemetery which includes opening/closing of the grave, a government-furnished grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a [government-furnished upright headstone or flat marker or niche cover](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hmm/index.asp) (<http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hmm/index.asp>) all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for a [burial flag](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/burial_benefits/burial_flags.asp) (http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/burial_benefits/burial_flags.asp) and [Presidential Memorial Certificate](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/pmc.asp) (<http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/pmc.asp>).

Burial in a VA national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces and Veterans who have met minimum active-duty service requirements, as applicable by law, and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty under certain circumstances or who die while on training duty are also eligible for burial, as are service members and former service members who were eligible for retired pay at the time of their death. Spouses, minor children and, under certain conditions, dependent unmarried adult children are also eligible for burial even if they predecease the Veteran.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has implemented this pre-need eligibility program so that Veterans, spouses and unmarried dependent adult children may better prepare for burial in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Interested individuals may submit [VA Form 40-10007](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-10007.pdf), (<https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-10007.pdf>) *Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery*, along with a copy of supporting documentation of military service such as a DD214, if readily available, by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov; or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151. Authorized representatives can also apply on behalf of eligible claimants. An authorized agent or representative is an individual authorized by the claimant to make decisions on the claimant's behalf. An authorized representative first needs to be recognized by VA as an authorized representative or agent by filing a [VA Form 21-22](http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22-ARE.pdf) (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22-ARE.pdf>) *Appointment of Veterans Service*

Organization As Claimant Representative or VA Form 21-22a (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22A-ARE.pdf>) Appointment of Attorney Or Agent As Claimant Representative. You can access the forms at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22A-ARE.pdf and VA Form 21-22a at www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-22A-ARE.pdf. Written authorization should be included with the VA Form 40-10007, *Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery*, if available. A notarized statement is not required.

VA will review pre-need burial applications and provide written notice of a determination of eligibility. VA will store the pre-need application, supporting documentation, and the decision letter to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. We encourage you to keep the decision letter with supporting documentation with your important papers in a safe place and to discuss your burial wishes and final arrangements with your loved ones or other representatives. Submission of a pre-need burial eligibility application does not oblige the Veteran or family member to burial in a VA national cemetery.

Applicants may indicate a *preference* for a VA national cemetery on the application form, but a pre-need determination of eligibility does not guarantee burial in a specific VA national cemetery or a specific gravesite. VA assigns gravesites in cemeteries with available space once death has occurred and the burial is scheduled.

At your time of need, your next-of-kin, funeral home or other representative responsible for making your final arrangements should contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117 to request a burial. VA will locate your pre-need decision letter and validate our determination. Because laws affecting VA burial eligibility and individual circumstances may change, upon receipt of a burial request, VA will verify pre-need decisions in accordance with the laws in effect at that time including bars to receipt of burial benefits.

ARLINGTON National Cemetery

HONOR • REMEMBER • EXPLORE

Fact Sheet



Eligibility

Arlington National Cemetery's eligibility requirements for burial and inurnment are different from other national cemeteries that are maintained by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Eligibility for in-ground burial at Arlington National Cemetery is the most stringent of all U.S. national cemeteries. However, most veterans, who have at least one day of active service (other than for training) and an honorable discharge, are eligible for above-ground inurnment. Eligibility is determined at the time of need. An honorable discharge is required for any interments at Arlington National Cemetery.

Service Member With Honorable Discharge	Eligibility*	
	Inurnment in Columbarium Court or Niche Wall	In-ground burial (Casket or Urn)
Dies on Title 10 Federal Active Duty (other than for training)	Yes	Yes
Dies on Active Duty for training only under Title X	Yes	No
Veteran - Retired from active duty; receiving retirement pay	Yes	Yes
Veteran - At least one day active duty other than for training	Yes	No
Veteran - Received Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross (Air Force or Navy), Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, or Purple Heart	Yes	Yes
Any member of a Reserve component of the Armed Forces, and any member of the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard, whose death occurs under honorable conditions while on active duty for training or performing full-time service.	Yes	No
Any former prisoner of war who, while a prisoner of war, served honorably in the active military, naval, or air service; whose last period of service terminated honorably; and who died on or after Nov. 30, 1993	Yes	Yes

*Reflects current eligibility criteria, as of July 1, 2017, in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 32, Part 553, Section 12 and 13.

More detailed information on eligibility can be found at:

<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/FuneralInformation/EstablishServices.aspx>

Writing a Last Will and Testament

Although writing a last will and testament is not required, it is recommended that military retirees and their families have wills, even if you do not have kids or valuable property. A valid will is a legally binding document that ensures your wishes are carried out after your death. If you haven't created one already, here are several reasons why you should consider preparing a will.

Importance of the will

If you own property, you'll want to determine who receives ownership in the event of your death. Particularly if you own property, you can determine how your estate will be divided.

If you own property, for instance, your estate may increase in value after mortgage replacement or general appreciation. If you don't have a will, you won't have a say in how your estate gets divided.

As a parent, a will can help you determine the appropriate guardians for your children. A will is needed to establish legal guardianship. Without a will, a judge will choose guardians for your children and determine who raises them.

When you can write and update a will

Any person aged 18 or older who is of sound mind can write a will. However, keep in mind if you write a will under life-threatening circumstances, the will could be challenged. If you do not write your will personally, but rather a friend or family member writes it for you, your will could be challenged or revoked.

An attorney at your legal assistance office can help you draw up a will and any associated estate-planning documents. You can change your will at any time as long as you meet certain conditions, like rewriting the entire will or using an amendment called a 'codicil.' You may want to update your will with your attorney if:

- You get married or divorced
- A birth or death in your family affects your plan in your will
- You have a large increase or decrease in the value of your property
- The person you name as executor, guardian or trustee dies or becomes unavailable to serve
- The laws associated with estate taxes change
- You change your state of legal residence
- You wish to change how you want your property distributed

Make the right preparations for your family and estate. Your legal assistance office can help you create a will that suits your desires and needs. In the event your legal assistance attorney can't give you the advice you need for your property, legal assistance will help you find a civilian attorney.

Retiree/Retiree Survivor Legal Questions and Assistance?

Go to <https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil/> or call the Vandenberg SFB Legal Office at 805-605-6200 to set up an appointment!

Advanced Medical Directive (Living Will)

What is an “Advance Medical Directive”?

An Advance Medical Directive (AMD), also known as a living will, is a voluntary document that allows you to tell your doctors what you want done should you become terminally ill. It applies when your physician diagnoses you as having an incurable and irreversible condition resulting in death within a relatively short period of time. In your AMD, you express your wishes as to how you want to be treated.

Every adult in the United States has the legal right to consent to or refuse medical treatment, under the Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990.

Many such people recognize that they do not want their lives artificially prolonged, while others may want actions taken to preserve their lives, even if artificially. Any competent person 18 years of age or older may execute an AMD. An AMD informs your medical care providers and family members of your wishes regarding your medical care, including the following: the type of life support measures you want them to remove, including feeding tubes; whether you want to die at home rather than in a hospital; and whether or not you want to donate your organs for transplant or medical research (many states also permit this choice on your driver's license). Signing an AMD does not take away your right to decide on treatment, if you are still competent to do so.

What Happens Without an Advance Medical Directive?

An AMD allows you to make the decisions now while you are healthy and mentally competent. If you do not create an AMD and do not have a Do-Not-Resuscitate order, all life support measures will likely be provided to you and will likely not be removed until the treating physician consults appropriate family, friends, clergy, and/or the court, regarding your medical treatment. Health care providers often will assume you want them to do everything in their power to prolong your life artificially, regardless of your prognosis. Your family will be practically powerless to take you off life support, even if you have no chance of recovery. Additionally, if no arrangements are made for medical directives and you become incapacitated, the court may appoint a guardian for you to make certain decisions in your “best interest.” Although it is not the primary concern in these situations, the expense of using such artificial life support systems can drain an average estate in a matter of days, leaving little to nothing for your survivors. If you have other wishes, you should execute an AMD.

The “Power of Attorney (POA) for Health Care” for the Constant Vegetative State

Your AMD will not address your needs if you are in a constant vegetative state and your death is not imminent. Instead, another type of advance directive, a document called a Durable Power of Attorney (POA) for health care will allow you to appoint an agent to make health care decisions during such a time. Importantly, a durable POA for health care is limited to health care decisions, while a more extensive durable POA may potentially allow your agent to make other important decisions for you, including making bank transactions, signing Social Security checks, applying for disability, or simply writing checks to pay your utility bill while you are medically incapacitated.

For a durable POA for health care to activate, you must be unable to make health care decisions for yourself. The document requires that you give the agent guidance in advance as to how to carry out your wishes. For example, if you are unconscious because you have been in a car accident and you need your health care decisions to be made for you, such as whether to refuse or accept medical treatment or to employ or discharge medical personnel, your durable POA for health care will empower your agent to act and decide for you.

Since it is impossible to predict every possible contingency in an AMD, having both a living will and a durable POA for health care enables you to handle other kinds of gray-area cases where it is uncertain whether you are terminally ill, or your doctor or state law fails to give your wishes due weight. You should review both documents to ensure that provisions in your advance medical directive and durable POA for health care work together do not contradict one another.

Make copies of your completed advance directives (AMD and/or POA) for your doctor's files, agent, family, and, if applicable, your health care facility. Discuss the policies of your health care provider and be sure they are compatible with your own beliefs and that your wishes will be honored. If your doctor cannot, or will not, carry out your wishes, he or she must transfer you to a doctor who will do as you direct.

Retiree/Retiree Survivor Legal Questions and Assistance?

Go to <https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil/> or call the Vandenberg SFB Legal Office at 805-605-6200 to set up an appointment!