

# The Role of a Caregiver During the Funeral Planning Process

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**One thing that caregivers may find themselves dealing with is helping a loved one make their funeral plans or making the plans for a loved one who has passed. Here are some ways a caregiver can support the funeral planning process.**

**Be supportive and patient.** Making final arrangements is often a difficult task. Encourage your loved one to share their thoughts and opinions, but be patient if they need to take a break from the process.



**Ask questions.** If you're having a hard time getting started, one of the best things to do is ask questions. These don't need to be specific to the funeral planning process. For example, ask about things like how they met their spouse, their childhood growing up, or their favorite hobbies. These can help give you ideas for things they might (or might not) want in their service.

**Bring a friend along to the funeral home.** When you do go to a funeral home, consider bringing along a friend who is not close to your loved one. It can be helpful to have an objective person there while you are considering costs and options.

**Set a budget.** Funeral homes have lots of options to cater to many different tastes and it can be easy to get carried away with so many things to plan. Set a budget beforehand and research general expected costs for different items. And know that cutting out things doesn't mean you are shortchanging your loved one. Focus instead on how you can best celebrate your loved one's life and what was important to them.

**Research burial benefits for veterans.** If your loved one is a veteran, then they are likely eligible for funeral and burial benefits. They may be eligible for burial at one of the 139 national cemeteries. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides other burial benefits such as a \$300 burial allowance, a VA allowance to help cover the cost of the gravesite/interment and transportation of the deceased to the final resting place. Your loved one may also be eligible to receive a burial flag and Presidential Memorial Certificate free of charge. You can visit the VA's burial benefits webpage for more details.

**Read up on the regulations about sales of funeral goods and services.** The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has a set of guidelines set up to protect consumers who plan a funeral, either in advance or at the time of need. Your state may have its own laws as well concerning things such as prepayment of funeral plans. While reputable funeral homes will most likely follow these guidelines, it can be helpful to know what these guidelines and laws are so that you can help support your loved one.

While planning a funeral can be an emotional process, know that honoring your loved one's final wishes can be a meaningful and beautiful experience as well.