

June 25, 2025

SURVIVORS ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL SUPPORT

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) notice establishes interim policy regarding updated oversight requirements for the Survivors Assistance and Memorial Support (SAMS) Program, formerly known as Decedent Affairs (DA). This VHA notice provides an initial framework for the establishment and oversight for SAMS at National, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), and VA medical facility levels to ensure support to primary survivors and next of kin (NOK). This additional support is not intended to create a new Veteran category or negate the provision of bereavement services authorized under VHA Directive 1601B.04, Decedent Affairs, dated December 1, 2017.

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA is committed to providing personalized, supportive services to families, caregivers, and survivors at the end of a Veteran's life and ensuring Veterans without identified family receive dignified interments to honor their service. The SAMS Program, formerly known as Decedent Affairs, supports infrastructure at every level for standardized clinical and operational processes, training, and oversight. As stated in VHA Directive 1601B.04, the remains of Veterans who expire while receiving VA authorized hospital care, nursing home, or domiciliary care must be handled in a dignified manner.

b. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report No. 19-09592-262, Improvements Needed to Ensure Final Disposition of Unclaimed Veterans' Remains, published December 15, 2021, found inadequate clarity regarding oversight of VHA decedent affairs functions. This report identified risks where Veterans' NOK may not be identified, procedures for paying for funeral home services were insufficient, and expectations for VA medical facility decedent affairs were unclear.

c. In May 2023, the Under Secretary for Health formalized the realignment of VHA Decedent Affairs Program under Care Management and Social Work Services (CMSW).

d. For definitions of key terms used throughout this notice, see: https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261125/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Chief Operating Officer.** The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for:

(1) Communicating the contents of this notice to each of the Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISN).

(2) Ensuring each VISN Director has the necessary resources to implement this notice.

(3) Assisting VISN Directors to resolve implementation and compliance challenges in all VA medical facilities within that VISN.

(4) Overseeing VISNs to ensure compliance with and effectiveness of this notice.

b. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Patient Care Services/Chief Nursing Officer.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Patient Care Services/Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) is responsible for supporting Care Management and Social Work (CMSW) with implementation of this notice.

c. **Executive Director, Care Management and Social Work Services.** The Executive Director, CMSW is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that the standards specified by this notice are implemented as intended and ensuring that corrective action is taken when noncompliance is identified.

(2) Establishing and maintaining the SAMS Program. This includes collaborating with the National Director, SAMS Program, as well as the VISN SAMS Lead, to identify and obtain information related to SAMS program issues, concerns, and trends.

(3) Ensuring the SAMS Program has sufficient resources to fulfill the terms of this notice.

d. **National Director, Survivors Assistance and Memorial Support Program.** The National Director, SAMS Program is responsible for implementation of SAMS operations to ensure compliance with applicable Federal and state laws, regulations, and standards, including those specified in VHA Directive 1601B.04. This includes collaborating with the Executive Director, CMSW to identify and obtain information related to SAMS program issues, concerns, and trends, and reviewing action plans submitted by the VISN SAMS Lead.

e. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that all VA medical facilities within the VISN comply with this notice and informing the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Patient Care Services/CNO and the Chief Operating Officer when barriers to compliance are identified.

(2) Communicating the contents of this notice to all VA medical facilities within the VISN.

(3) Ensuring each VA medical facility within the VISN has sufficient resources to implement this notice.

(4) Contributing to or leading the development of mitigation or corrective action, in collaboration with stakeholders such as VISN and other program office leadership (e.g., VISN Directors, CMOs, and Chaplain Services), to address noncompliance by VA medical facilities within the VISN with this notice.

(5) Reviewing tracking data reported monthly by the VA medical facility Chief of Staff (COS) and Associate Director for Patient Care Services (ADPCS) through the SAMS Data Collection Tool to ensure accuracy and completeness. The SAMS Data Collection Tool is available at: <https://apps.gov.powerapps.us/play/e/default-e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf/a/455cb486-4bfd-4544-b437-18869f6e3b3e?tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf&hint=518f1810-bb45-4e51-b6f5-3a666321b753&sourcetime=1745345388596&source=portal>. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

f. **Veterans Integrated Services Network Chief Nursing Officer.** The VISN CNO is responsible for serving as the clinical leader within the VISN and for designating a VISN SAMS Lead to perform VISN level program requirements.

g. **Veterans Integrated Services Network Survivors Assistance and Memorial Support Lead.** The VISN SAMS Lead is designated by the VISN CNO and is responsible for:

(1) Serving as the subject matter expert for the SAMS Program in the VISN and assisting the Executive Director, CMSW and National Director, SAMS Program with identifying and obtaining information related to SAMS program issues, concerns, and trends.

(2) Providing VISN-level oversight, support, and evaluation and monitoring for the clinical and business components of the SAMS program. This includes, but is not limited to:

(a) Ensuring VA medical facilities within the VISN provide survivors with information, by offering bereavement support services and documenting offers and responses within the electronic health record (EHR).

(b) Handling inquiries or notifications of Veteran deaths external to VHA, determining when Veteran remains are unclaimed, and releasing claimed Veterans remains or providing dignified burials for Veterans whose remains are unclaimed.

(c) Monitoring VA medical facility compliance with this notice and VHA Directive 1601B.04, including but not limited to documentation and data collection requirements for decedents (e.g., count, timeliness).

(d) Creating monitoring mechanisms and recurring training to support the analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of SAMS.

(3) Engaging internal and external partners (e.g., Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), funeral homes) to promote, inform, and educate about SAMS program and services.

(4) Establishing regular communication, as needed based on identified issues, at the request of the VISN Director, with the Social Work Chief or Executive and DA Clerks at VA medical facilities within the VISN through conference calls, face-to-face meetings, or mail groups.

(5) Submitting action plans to the SAMS National Program Office at VHASAMS@va.gov for any Veteran remains in a VA medical facility within their VISN which have not been dispositioned within 14 calendar days of death.

h. **VA Medical Facility Director.** The VA medical facility Director is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring overall VA medical facility compliance with this notice and taking corrective action if noncompliance is identified.

(2) Communicating the contents of this notice to VA medical facility staff, and ensuring they receive education and information about SAMS expectations.

(3) Supporting the implementation of the SAMS Program, an expansion of the prior Decedent Affairs Program, at the VA medical facility through effective change management. For further guidance, see the Six Essential Questions available at: https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/vhasams/Resources_clinicians/SAMS%20Six%20Essential%20Questions%20Handout%20508%20Compliant%207-15-24%20v2.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=WfPH8p. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(4) Designating a Service Chief to oversee storing Veteran belonging, funds, or other property, and a VA medical facility Pathology and Laboratory Service Chief or a VA medical facility Service Chief to oversee the physical morgue including overflow procedures.

(5) Ensuring the VA medical facility has processes in place for providing and managing post-mortem examination services, either on-site or by referral, in accordance with 38 C.F.R. § 17.170, VHA Directive 1601B.04, and VHA Directive 1106, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service, dated January 24, 2024. For additional guidance, see the KMS job available at: https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258864/Requests-for-Autopsy. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(6) Making the final determination for unclaimed remains in accordance with VHA Directive 1601B.04 and the KMS job aid available at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258867/Unclaimed-Remains-Under-VHA-Authorized-Admission. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(7) Authorizing certain persons at the VA medical facility who may release information to the media or public about a decedent or conditions surrounding the death for serious incident reports. See paragraph 5.d. for additional details.

i. VA Medical Facility Chief of Staff and Associate Director for Patient Care Services. The VA medical facility COS and ADPCS are responsible for:

(1) Providing clinical consultation to the VA medical facility Director for unique circumstances related to authorizing certain persons at the VA medical facility who may release information to the media or public about a decedent or conditions surrounding the death for serious incident reports. See paragraph 5.d. for additional details.

(2) Assigning a full-time DA Clerk to report directly to the VA medical facility Social Work Chief or Executive. **NOTE:** If the DA Clerk leaves the position or is temporarily assigned to other duties, the VA medical facility COS and ADPCS must assign a full-time acting DA Clerk within 30 calendar days.

(3) Ensuring that the VA medical facility Social Work Chief or Executive provides guidance to VA medical facility clinical staff or health care providers on the process of how to notify the DA Clerk or Health Administrative Specialist on Duty (HOD), chaplain, and social work staff of Veterans' deaths, including when clinical staff or health care providers become aware of deaths of Veterans when engaged with a NOK, Veteran, friend, caregiver, or family member.

(4) Ensuring compliance with tracking the status of all claimed or unclaimed Veteran remains within the morgue or VA-contracted morgue and reporting monthly to the VISN Director through the SAMS Data Collection Tool.

(5) Ensuring that the DA Clerk executes duties for unclaimed Veterans remains, including providing a dignified interment within 14 calendar days when the decedent has no NOK and is under authorized care, in accordance with VHA Directive 1601B.04 and the KMS job aid available at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258867/Unclaimed-Remains-Under-VHA-Authorized-Admission. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

j. VA Medical Facility Social Work Chief or Executive. The VA medical facility Social Work Chief or Executive (in accordance with VHA Directive 1110.02, Social Work Professional Practice, dated August 16, 2024) is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring compliance with SAMS program requirements, including but not limited to, ensuring clinical staff or health care providers notify the DA Clerk or HOD, chaplain, and social work staff of Veteran deaths.

(2) Collaborating with the VA medical facility Chief of Health Administration Service, Medical Administration, Business Office, or Patient Administration Services to ensure HODs are trained and allocated protected time to execute SAMS duties. For further information, see the SAMS Executive Decision Memorandum available at:

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vhasams/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=3K3Wyg&CID=857fd5de%2De15f%2D4d31%2Db759%2D30e415ba283d&FolderCTID=0x0120003FF48B886930E141BF5A1BE749069263&id=%2Fsites%2Fvhasams%2FShared%20Documents%2FPolicy%20%26%20Guidance>. **NOTE:**

This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(3) Reviewing the EHR to ensure the VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD offers bereaved family member(s) information on funeral, interment and survivors' benefits, and referral to the VBA or NCA to access benefits.

(4) Ensuring that the DA Clerk offers administrative support to the primary survivor for the time between the Veteran's death to dignified interment, including referrals to non-VA resources.

(5) Ensuring that the DA Clerk assesses remains for unclaimed determination and recommending the appropriate disposition to the VA medical facility Director within 14 calendar days.

(6) Ensuring that the DA Clerk coordinates mortuary and interment services for unclaimed remains of Veterans who die under VA-authorized admission. See https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258867/Unclaimed-Remains-Under-VHA-Authorized-Admission.

(7) Ensuring NOK notification by the VA medical facility treating health care provider within 4 hours of death in accordance with

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258844/. **NOTE:** *This is an internal*

VA website that is not available to the public.

(8) Ensuring that only SAMS EHR Progress Notes are used for documentation to ensure survivor assistance, memorial support, and related contacts with survivors are easily identified in the EHR and to support national data collection. See SAMS EHR Progress Notes at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261126/. **NOTE:** *This is an internal*

VA website that is not available to the public.

(9) Providing technical access to the SAMS Data Collection Tool for appropriate staff. This may entail coordinating with appropriate Quality and Training staff (e.g., Associate Director for Quality and Training) in granting access.

(10) Consulting with VA District Counsel as necessary on matters pertaining to state, county, or local laws related to notifying the coroner or medical examiner of deaths and the completion of death certificates; and ensuring the VA medical facility implements this policy in a manner consistent with the legal requirements of those jurisdictions.

k. VA Medical Facility Pathology and Laboratory Service Chief or Clinical VA Medical Facility Service Chief. The VA medical facility Director designates either the Pathology and Laboratory Service Chief or clinical Service Chief to oversee the physical morgue. The VA medical facility Pathology or Laboratory Service Chief or clinical VA medical facility Service Chief designated to oversee the physical morgue is responsible for:

(1) Directing responsible service line staff to coordinate with the VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD for the release and removal of Veteran remains from the VA medical facility.

(2) Establishing a morgue management plan, to include intake and release of remains, morgue use, access, and maintenance, and overflow procedures.

l. VA Medical Facility Treating Health Care Providers. The VA medical facility treating health care provider is responsible for:

(1) Notifying the NOK or emergency contact within 4 hours of death in the EHR.
NOTE: If unable to contact within 4 hours of death, the VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD is responsible for continuing attempts to locate and notify NOK and emergency contacts.

(2) Signing death certificates within 2 business days of notification of the Veteran's death and as defined by state and local laws. ***NOTE: Determination of whether a Veteran died under a health care provider's care and which health care providers can sign a death certificate varies by local jurisdiction and includes factors such as a recent Veteran encounter or an active prescription written by the health care provider. VISN Office of General Counsel must be consulted for questions on the requirements within each state, county, or local jurisdiction. For further information, see:***
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258849/. ***This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.***

(3) Notifying the medical examiner or coroner in accordance with the requirements outlined in the KMS job aid available at:
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258852/. ***NOTE: This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.***

m. **VA Medical Facility Chaplain Service Staff.** The VA medical facility chaplain service staff is responsible for coordinating with the VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD as necessary, to assist family members in accessing VA bereavement counseling or grief support groups in the community. **NOTE:** *Eligibility criteria for bereavement counseling can be found in VHA Directive 1111, Spiritual and Pastoral Care in the Veterans Health Administration, dated July 21, 2021.*

n. **VA Medical Facility Chief of Health Administration Service, Medical Administration Service, Business Office, or Patient Administration Services.** The official responsible for managing administrative support operations at the VA medical facility is responsible for:

(1) Collaborating with the VA medical facility Social Work Chief or Executive to ensure HODs are properly trained in SAMS duties.

(2) Coordinating VA medical facility seamless handoffs related to after-hours SAMS duties.

o. **VA Medical Facility Decedent Affairs Clerk.** **NOTE:** *At some VA medical facilities, this role is referred to as the SAMS Specialist.* The VA medical facility DA Clerk is responsible for:

(1) Providing time-limited administrative support to the primary survivor for planning purposes prior to death and from death until the dignified interment of the Veteran, including referrals to non-VA resources.

(2) Completing death notifications outlined in paragraph 5 and NOK notifications when the VA medical facility treating health care provider cannot complete contact within 4 hours of death, in accordance with the NOK decision tree available at: https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258844/Notification-of-Next-of-Kin-NOK. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(3) Utilizing the Survivor Contact Administrative Note and Administrative Death Certificate Note to document contacts with survivors and death certificates in the EHR. See https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261126/. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(4) Coordinating mortuary and interment services for unclaimed remains of Veterans who die under VA-authorized admission, in accordance with paragraph 6 and the KMS job aid available at: https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258867/Unclaimed-Remains-Under-VHA-Authorized-Admission. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(5) Requesting the NCA Scheduling Office Eligibility Verification Division or the VA Grant-Funded State or Tribal Cemetery determination for interment eligibility prior to release of remains to funeral home or mortuary providing funeral services, in accordance with the KMS job aid available at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258862/. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(6) Complying with SAMS coordination expectations within the VA medical facility as outlined in the KMS job aid available at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261165/. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(7) Tracking Veteran remains in their custody and submitting tracking data weekly to the SAMS Data Collection Tool, available at:

<https://apps.gov.powerapps.us/play/e/default-e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf/a/455cb486-4bfd-4544-b437-18869f6e3b3e?tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf&hint=518f1810-bb45-4e51-b6f5-3a666321b753&sourcetime=1745345388596&source=portal>. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public. Users must request access from the VA medical facility Social Work Chief or Executive.*

(8) Offering bereaved family member(s) information on funeral, interment and survivors' benefits, and referral to the VBA and NCA to access benefits, in coordination with VA medical facility chaplain service staff as necessary.

(9) Completing autopsy requests in accordance with 38 C.F.R. § 17.170, VHA Directive 1106, VHA Directive 1601B.04, and the KMS job aid available at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258864/Requests-for-Autopsy. **NOTE:** *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(10) Coordinating with the VA medical facility Pathology and Laboratory Service Chief or official designated for overseeing the morgue to release and remove patient remains from the VA medical facility. **NOTE:** *Disposition of remains must be consistent with legal requirements of the State, county, or local jurisdiction. Release of remains must be in a manner consistent with the wishes of the Veteran, as local regulations allow, the NOK, or other designee by law unless otherwise stipulated by the medical examiner or coroner. For further guidance on procedures for removal and disposition of remains, see the KMS job aid available at:*

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258859/. *This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.*

(11) Releasing the deceased Veteran's personal effects and funds to the NOK in accordance with paragraph 4 and the KMS job:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000236280/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(12) Executing duties for unclaimed Veteran remains including providing a dignified interment within 14 calendar days when the decedent has no NOK and is under authorized care, in accordance with VHA Directive 1601B.04 and the KMS job aid available at:

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258867/Unclaimed-Remains-Under-VHA-Authorized-Admission. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

(13) Assessing remains for unclaimed determination and recommending the appropriate disposition to the VA medical facility Director within 14 calendar days.

p. **VA Medical Facility Health Administrative Specialist on Duty**. The VA medical facility HOD, formerly known as the Administrative Officer of the Day, is responsible for:

(1) Completing all responsibilities and functions of the VA medical facility DA Clerk during other-than-regular business hours. See paragraph 2.o. for VA medical facility DA Clerk responsibilities.

(2) Notifying the VA medical facility DA Clerk on the following business day of deaths which occur during other than regular business hours.

4. DEATH OF A VETERAN WHO LACKS DECISION MAKING CAPACITY

Refer to KMS job aid, Death of a Patient Who Lacks Decision-Making Capacity: https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261129/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

5. DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

The VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD must update or notify, as applicable, the following upon notification of a Veteran's death.

a. **Pharmacy Services**. Information must be shared by the VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD with Pharmacy Services at the VA medical facility to determine actions required for active prescriptions.

b. **Outpatient Appointments and Patient Aligned Care Team**. Information must be shared by the VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD with the treating health care provider at the VA medical facility or community care, and the outpatient clinic administrators or the Group Practice Manager (GPM) to facilitate cancellation of future appointments; review Patient Aligned Care Team assignment; discharge the Veteran from clinics; and update consults, recall reminders, and electronic wait lists. **NOTE:** For

VHA policy and procedures on managing Veteran appointments, refer to VHA Directive 1230, Outpatient Scheduling Management, dated June 1, 2022.

c. **Electronic Health Record.** The DA Clerk or HOD must attempt to obtain a copy of death certificate and record the date of death in the EHR. **NOTE:** *The Master Patient Index enables sharing of identity data across VA systems, including VBA; and shares the death information once the verified date of death has been entered into VHA's EHR. For information on acceptable sources of death information and procedures for recording death notifications, refer to VHA Directive 1906, Data Quality Requirements for Health Care Identity Management and Master Person Index Functions, dated April 10, 2020.*

d. **Serious Incident Reports.** The VA medical facility DA Clerk or HOD must notify VA Police immediately, no later than 2 hours, of any death occurring at any VA medical facility that results from homicide, suicide, crime, or suspected crime. **NOTE:** *Only the VA medical facility Public Affairs Officer or persons specifically authorized by the VA medical facility Director may release information to the media or public about a decedent or conditions surrounding the death.*

6. TRANSPORTATION OF REMAINS

Family members claiming the remains of a Veteran who dies as a result of a service-connected disability or was receiving service-connected disability compensation on the date of death may be eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred for transporting the remains, depending on the Veteran's final resting place. In this case, the amount paid by the VA medical facility must not exceed the cost to transport the remains to the national cemetery closest to the Veteran's last place of residence in which interment space is available. If the Veteran's remains are unclaimed and there are not sufficient resources available in the Veteran's estate, VA may pay the maximum burial allowance for the interment and funeral expenses to ensure a dignified interment of the Veteran. See 38 U.S.C. §§ 2303 and 2308; 38 C.F.R. §§ 3.1708 and 3.1709.

7. REFERENCES

- a. 38 U.S.C. §§ 2303 and 2308.
- b. 38 C.F.R. §§ 17.170, 3.1708, and 3.1709.
- c. VHA Directive 1106, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service, dated January 24, 2024.
- d. VHA Directive 1110.02, Social Work Professional Practice, dated August 16, 2024.
- e. VHA Directive 1111, Spiritual Care, dated July 21, 2021.
- f. VHA Directive 1230, Outpatient Scheduling Management, dated June 1, 2022.

g. VHA Directive 1601B.04, Decedent Affairs, dated December 1, 2017.

h. VHA Directive 1906, Data Quality Requirements for Health Care Identity Management and Master Person Index Functions, dated April 10, 2020.

i. VA OIG Report No.:19-09592-262, Improvements Needed to Ensure Final Disposition of Unclaimed Veterans' Remains, December 15, 2021.
<https://www.vaogig.gov/reports/review/improvements-needed-ensure-final-disposition-unclaimed-veterans-remains>.

j. SAMS Key Terms.
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261125/ **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

k. SAMS Data Collection Tool. <https://apps.gov.powerapps.us/play/e/default-e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf/a/455cb486-4bfd-4544-b437-18869f6e3b3e?tenantId=e95f1b23-abaf-45ee-821d-b7ab251ab3bf&hint=518f1810-bb45-4e51-b6f5-3a666321b753&sourcetime=1745345388596&source=portal>. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

l. SAMS Program Six Essential Questions.
https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/vhasams/Resources_clinicians/SAMS%20Six%20Essential%20Questions%20Handout%20508%20Compliant%207-15-24%20v2.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=WfPH8p. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

m. Autopsies.
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258864/Requests-for-Autopsy. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

n. Unclaimed Remains Under VA Care or VA-Authorized Admission.
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258867/Unclaimed-Remains-Under-VA-Care-or-VA-Authorized-Admission. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

o. Notification of Next of Kin.
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258844/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

p. Death Certificates.
https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258849/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

q. SAMS EHR Progress Notes.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261126/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

r. Medical Examiner/Coroner Notification.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258852/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

s. NCA Interment Eligibility.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258862/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

t. SAMS Coordination Expectations within the VA Medical Facility.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261165/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

u. Removal and Disposition of Remains.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000258859/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

v. Release of Personal Effects and Funds.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000236280/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

w. Death of a Patient Who Lacks Decision-Making Capacity.

https://vaww.vrm.km.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_kanew/help/agent/locale/en-us/portal/55440000001062/content/554400000261129/. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

x. SAMS Executive Decision Memorandum.

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vhasams/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?csf=1&web=1&e=3K3Wyg&CID=857fd5de%2De15f%2D4d31%2Db759%2D30e415ba283d&FolderCTID=0x0120003FF48B886930E141BF5A1BE749069263&id=%2Fsites%2Fvhasams%2FShared%20Documents%2FPolicy%20%26%20Guidance>. **NOTE:** This is an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

8. All inquiries concerning this action should be addressed to CMSW (12CMSW) at: VHA12CMSWSAMS@va.gov.

9. This VHA notice will expire and be archived on June 30, 2026.

June 25, 2025

VHA NOTICE 2025-03

**BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:**

/s/ M. Christopher Saslo
DNS, ARNP-BC, FAANP
Assistant Under Secretary for Health
for Patient Care Services/CNO

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