



Veteran Pinning Ceremony

This guide can be used to provide added meaning to the Pinning Ceremony through which the contributions of Veterans can be acknowledged by your hospice.

Purpose

To publicly acknowledge the military service and sacrifices made by the Veteran and his/her family. The ceremony gives an opportunity for each veteran to share part of his or her story. By doing so, a sense of meaning and purpose can be gained by the Veteran.

There are two basic types of ceremonies:

- 1. Planned Ceremony** - A planned ceremony is one coordinated to enable family and staff (as many as possible) to be present for the ceremony. Sometimes, it will be connected to a holiday such as Veterans Day or Memorial Day. In most cases, the Veterans will share some of their stories and the staff will have insight as to the importance of each Veteran's military service. It is not uncommon for the family to be unaware of these stories if the veteran didn't talk about his/her service or role in the military. The chaplain or social worker may have noted a need of the Veteran to find meaning and purpose for his/her life. Having a sense of meaning and purpose becomes more important at the end of life. We all want to know our life and work has value.
- 2. Unexpected or Spontaneous Opportunities** - You can also thank Veterans in informal or unexpected settings, such when staff visits a patient's home or facility for an admission or care visit. One's judgment chooses the right time to do the pinning. While perhaps spontaneous, it is always good to present the pin in front of an audience – even a small one -- especially if can include the patient's family. It helps to have a small supply of pins with you during visits, since one never knows when an opportunity will present itself.

During the Ceremony

Consider asking the veteran:

- Ms./Mr. Veteran, we are here to acknowledge your service to the nation. Would you be willing to tell us some of what you did in the military?
- When did you go in, where did you serve, what do you remember most?
- How long did you serve?

The host should:

- Listen to the story and ask questions.
- Think about videotaping the Veteran, with his/her permission.
- Allow the family to ask questions and add information.

Suggested Words for the Pinning Ceremony

Ms./Mr. Veteran, thank you for your service to our nation. Thank you for the sacrifices you made and our willingness to serve our country. You endured hardships and you were willing to risk your life to maintain our freedom. On behalf of (our staff, the VA, ___ Hospice) please accept our thanks and gratitude. When you see this pin, know that your service to the nation is deeply appreciated. We thank you.