



# The Veteran Honor Flag & *Final Salute* Program

A Protocol for Dignity · Launching Memorial Day 2026

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Honoring Those Who Served — In Their Final Moments

The Veteran Honor Flag & Final Salute Program ensures that every veteran who passes at Kaiser South Sacramento is honored for their service with dignity, intention, and care. Through a voluntary, staff-supported ceremony, we place an American flag over our veterans at the time of passing, invite staff to line the hallway in a final Honor Walk, and present a formally folded flag to their family as a lasting keepsake. This program integrates seamlessly into our existing workflows — it asks very little of our time. But what it gives to families, to staff, and to our hospital community is extraordinary.

“  
*People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,  
but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

— MAYA ANGELOU

## STEP-BY-STEP PROTOCOL

### How the Program Works

*Designed for seamless integration into nursing and transport protocols. Participation in the Honor Walk is always voluntary.*

#### PHASE 1 · PREPARATION & CONSENT

1

#### Identify Veteran Status at Admission

During the intake process, confirm veteran status and provide the patient with an American flag identification bracelet. This is a quiet, respectful signal to every member of the care team: this person served. Veteran status is documented and carried through the patient's chart.

2

#### Obtain Family Consent During End-of-Life Discussions

When entering sensitive end-of-life conversations with the family, gently explain the Honor Flag and Final Salute Program — what it is, what it looks like, and what the family can expect. Let the family choose. There is no pressure. For many families, simply being asked is already a meaningful act of recognition.

↓ AFTER PASSING ↓

#### PHASE 2 · THE FINAL TRIBUTE

3

#### Family Goodbyes & Flag Preparation

Allow the family time for private goodbyes at the bedside. Then invite the family to wait in the family waiting room while the care team prepares the veteran for transport. During this time, a member of security or volunteer services sits with the family — confirming the veteran's rank and branch of service, and offering space for the family to share memories or stories they would like honored in the ceremony.

4

#### Honor Flag Placement & Overhead Announcement

An American flag cover is carefully and respectfully placed over the veteran before transport begins. Notify the operator that you are ready for the Honor Walk. An overhead announcement will be made, inviting staff throughout the unit to participate voluntarily. Staff may line the hallway or gather at the patient's room doorway — there is no requirement, only an invitation.

5

#### Final Salute & Honor Walk

A staff member or supervisor reads the veteran's rank, name, and branch of service aloud. A brief, solemn moment of silence is observed. Then — together — we walk with them one last time through the halls of this hospital. It is a simple act. It is one of the most powerful things we can do.

6

#### Final Flag Presentation to the Family

A formally folded American flag is presented to the family — a tangible symbol that we saw their loved one's sacrifice, and that we are grateful. Accompanied by the Tribute and Remembrance Card, signed by the care team. This flag and this card are gifts they will carry for the rest of their lives.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

*Because of this program, they don't have to leave as strangers.*

**They leave as veterans. They leave honored.**

They leave with their family knowing that the people who cared for them in their most vulnerable hours also saw their greatest ones. This program was born from a belief in the dignity of every human life — especially at its most vulnerable. It costs very little. It fits within the work we already do. But what it gives — to families, to our staff, to this hospital, and to our community — is something that cannot be measured.