

Does Delta Air Lines Provide Bereavement Tickets?

Direct answer: not as a published, fixed-discount programme. Delta Air Lines does not maintain a bereavement fare tariff with a defined percentage off, the way some airlines once did and a small number still do. What Delta has instead is **discretionary compassionate assistance** — agents and supervisors hold authority to waive fare differences, make exceptions to Basic Economy restrictions, waive award redeposit charges and prioritise rebooking, applied case by case rather than by rule.

That is a meaningfully different answer from a flat "no." American Airlines and United discontinued their programmes outright in 2014; Delta never published one but retained flexibility. Whether that helps you depends heavily on how you approach the conversation. If you need someone to search fares, routings and nearby airports quickly while you deal with everything else, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can run that comparison.

What "discretionary" actually means

There is no code to quote and no form to submit. There is a person with system authority and a range of things they can do if the situation warrants it.

What that authority can extend to:

- **Waiving a fare difference** when an existing ticket needs to move to a more expensive flight
- **Making exceptions to Basic Economy restrictions**, which normally block changes entirely
- **Waiving award redeposit fees** so miles can be returned and reused — Medallion members already receive free redeposit
- **Priority rebooking** onto the fastest available routing
- **Compassionate refund consideration** on non-refundable tickets with documentation

What it does not extend to: a guaranteed discount on a new ticket. There is no protected fare bucket that agents can open on request, and no percentage off a published fare.

One structural point in Delta's favour that has nothing to do with bereavement: **Delta charges no change fees on Main Cabin fares and above** on domestic and most international itineraries, a policy adopted in 2020. If you already hold a flexible ticket, you may not need a waiver at all — you may just need to change the flight and pay any fare difference, and it is the fare difference that a supervisor might waive.

How to have the conversation

Since the outcome depends on discretion, the approach matters more than usual.

Be direct and factual. Explain plainly what has happened, who has died or is critically ill, your relationship to them, and where and when you need to travel. Agents deal with this regularly and respond better to clarity than to distress.

Ask for specific things rather than "a bereavement fare." Requesting a product that does not exist wastes the call. Ask instead: *"Can the fare difference be waived?"* or *"Is there any flexibility on the Basic Economy change restriction given the circumstances?"*

Have documentation ready. Even without a formal programme, agents applying discretion want a factual basis.

Escalate politely if needed. Front-line agents have less latitude than supervisors. If the answer is a firm no on something material, it is reasonable to ask whether a supervisor can review it.

Do not buy first and ask later. This is the single most expensive mistake. Once a ticket is issued through a website or app, it is a completed retail transaction under standard fare rules, and there is generally no mechanism to convert it retroactively into anything more favourable. If you want discretionary help, ask **before** the ticket is issued.

Documentation to gather

- **Death certificate**, or an interim certificate if the full one has not been issued
- **Funeral home letter** on letterhead, with contact details and the name of the deceased
- **Hospital or hospice letter** where travel is for an imminent death rather than a funeral
- **Proof of relationship** — birth certificate, marriage certificate, or similar

Where airlines define eligible relationships, they typically cover spouse, domestic partner, parent, stepparent, child, stepchild, sibling, grandparent, grandchild and in-laws. Cousins, aunts and uncles usually fall outside.

What actually reduces the cost

Ordered roughly by how reliably these work.

1. Search the lowest published fare across every airport in range

The cheapest public fare frequently beats anything a compassionate discount would have produced. This is precisely why the industry abandoned fixed bereavement pricing — under dynamic pricing, a percentage off a full-flexible fare often came out **higher** than the lowest available fare anyone could book online.

Search the destination as a city. Check secondary airports within a two-hour drive. Flying into a larger airport and renting a car regularly saves hundreds on a route into a smaller city.

2. Use SkyMiles or transferable points

Award seats sometimes remain available on flights where cash fares have spiked. A last-minute \$900 cash fare against a 25,000-mile award is an excellent trade even at SkyMiles' relatively modest

valuation of around 1.1 to 1.2 cents per mile.

If you hold transferable credit card points, they can often move to an airline partner within minutes. Note that Medallion members receive free award redeposit if plans change, and Delta agents can waive redeposit charges for others in compassionate circumstances.

3. Compare other carriers

Since Delta has no fixed programme, there is no loyalty reason to stay with it for this trip. **Alaska Airlines** has been the most commonly cited U.S. carrier still operating a defined bereavement discount process, and Air Canada and WestJet have retained compassionate policies. If one of them serves your route, ask directly. Low-cost carriers on the route are also worth pricing — even with bags added, they sometimes undercut legacy fares substantially at short notice.

4. Book one-way now, return later

Funeral travel often has an uncertain return date. Rather than guessing and paying to change, book the outbound one-way now and the return once plans firm up. Two one-ways on domestic U.S. routes generally price no worse than a round trip.

5. Consider ground alternatives for shorter distances

Under about 400 miles, driving is often faster door to door once check-in, security and ground transport are counted — and dramatically cheaper at short notice. Amtrak in the Northeast Corridor competes well on both time and price against a last-minute flight between Washington, Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

6. Ask about the return leg once you have travelled

Changes to a ticket already in progress attract more agent discretion than a fresh purchase, and Delta's no-change-fee policy on Main Cabin and above means you may only face a fare difference.

What to avoid

Do not pay a third party for access to a "bereavement fare." Delta has no such product to sell access to.

Do not default to a fully refundable fare. They cost dramatically more. Only justified when the return date is genuinely unknowable and likely to move repeatedly.

Do not book Basic Economy in an emergency. It cannot be changed or refunded under normal rules, and while an agent may make an exception, relying on that is a poor plan. Pay the modest step up to Main Cabin for the flexibility.

Do not book the first fare you see while distressed. Ten minutes of comparison across airports and carriers routinely saves hundreds. If you cannot face it, have someone do it for you.

If you are already travelling when the news comes

A death often arrives mid-trip, and the situation is different from booking fresh.

You are in a stronger position than you think. Changing a ticket already in the system attracts more agent latitude than buying a new one, and Delta's no-change-fee policy on Main Cabin and above means the barrier is the fare difference rather than a penalty. It is that fare difference a supervisor can consider waiving.

Call rather than using the app. Self-service change tools apply fare rules mechanically and will simply quote you a price. Only a person can exercise discretion.

Ask about the unused portion. If you are cutting a trip short, the value of the unflown segments may be recoverable as a credit even on a non-refundable ticket, particularly with documentation. Do not simply no-show — that generally forfeits the remaining value entirely.

Check travel insurance and card benefits. Many travel insurance policies and premium credit cards include trip interruption cover that pays for a change or an additional flight home following a death in the immediate family. This is frequently the largest single source of money back, and it is routinely forgotten. Keep receipts and documentation.

What to expect emotionally from the process

A practical note, because it affects outcomes.

Airline agents handle these calls regularly and are, in general, decent about them. You do not need to justify your grief or persuade anyone that the situation is serious. State the facts, say what you need, and let them work.

You may also get a flat refusal, and it may come from someone perfectly sympathetic who simply lacks the system authority to do what you are asking. That is worth understanding before the call, because it is easy to read a policy limit as indifference. If a first answer is no on something that matters materially, ask calmly whether a supervisor can review — not because the agent is being obstructive, but because the authority genuinely sits at a different level.

Finally: if you cannot face any of this, delegate it. There is no requirement that the travelling passenger be the person who makes the booking call.

Where to get help

Contact	Number	Best for
Travel reservations and urgent booking support	1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)	Comparing fares across airports and carriers quickly, finding last-minute availability, one-way and flexible-return combinations, changing an existing ticket
Delta Reservations	Published on delta.com	Requesting compassionate consideration before a ticket is issued, changing an existing Delta ticket

Contact	Number	Best for
Delta refunds	Published on delta.com	Refund requests on non-refundable tickets with documentation
Other carriers' reservations	Published on each airline's site	Asking whether a formal bereavement discount applies on their route

Speaking to a person genuinely matters here. Urgent travel involves odd routings, mixed carriers and uncertain return dates — the situations where search engines are weakest.

Frequently asked questions

Does Delta offer bereavement fares? Not as a published fixed-discount programme. Delta applies compassionate assistance case by case through agent and supervisor discretion.

Will Delta give me a discount if I show a death certificate? There is no discount programme for it to unlock. Documentation supports discretionary requests — fare-difference waivers, Basic Economy exceptions, refund consideration — rather than a set percentage off.

Which airlines still have a formal bereavement discount? Alaska Airlines has been the most commonly cited U.S. carrier with a defined process. Air Canada and WestJet have also retained compassionate policies. Terms change, so confirm directly.

Can Delta refund a non-refundable ticket after a death? It is possible with documentation, particularly where the ticketed passenger or an immediate travelling companion has died. Contact refunds with a death certificate.

Does Delta charge change fees? Not on Main Cabin fares and above on domestic and most international itineraries. Basic Economy remains restricted, though exceptions have been made in compassionate cases.

Should I use SkyMiles for emergency travel? Often yes. Award availability sometimes persists when cash fares spike, and Medallion members can redeposit miles free if plans change.

Can I request a bereavement adjustment after buying online? Generally no. A ticket issued through a website or app is a completed transaction under standard fare rules. Ask before purchase.

The takeaway

Delta does not sell bereavement tickets, but it has not closed the door either. The value sits in supervisor discretion — waived fare differences, Basic Economy exceptions, free award redeposit — and in the no-change-fee policy that already applies to Main Cabin and above.

To use any of that, call before you buy, explain the situation plainly, ask for specific concessions rather than a product that does not exist, and have documentation to hand. Then, separately, do the

thing that saves the most money in practice: compare the lowest published fare across every airport within range, and check whether miles cover the seat outright.

If you would rather not run those searches yourself at a difficult moment, **1-888-374-4490 [US] (OTA)** can compare fares, airports and routings and come back with the practical options.