



SURVIVOR

CONTINUUM OF CARE



Commander's Guide





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INTRODUCTION

This guide introduces the triad focal-point which provides immediate and long-term support to family members in the event of an Airman or Guardian’s death: Casualty, Mortuary Affairs, and Air Force Families Forever. Experts from each program will provide guidance to assist you in navigating the loss. In addition to these programs, there are many agencies and organizations inside and outside the Department of the Air Force (DAF) that are critical to our overall capability to provide the highest level of care, service, and support to survivors: AF Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), Security Forces, Medical Group, local medical examiner/coroner (off-base deaths or death on-base without federal jurisdiction), local law enforcement agencies (off-base deaths), Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner (deaths under Federal Jurisdiction), the Accident Investigation Board, and the installation Violence Prevention Integrator.

This guide serves as a reference for you to assist in your role in the survivor continuum of care by providing information, appropriate contacts, and the tools necessary for Commander’s in response to the death of an Airman or Guardian in your unit. While we hope you will never need this resource, we trust the information and tools will be valuable in providing a timely and compassionate response to surviving family members. This guide should be used as a tool and is not meant as a replacement for policy.

This guide is applicable when a death occurs of a Regular AF (RegAF) Airman, Guardian or an Air Reserve Component (ARC) Airman who dies on active duty, inactive duty for training, or annual training.

To skip to guidance on immediate next steps, go to the [Commander’s Checklist](#). If you are the commander of an active duty survivor, go to this [Checklist](#).

POLICIES

The following policies provide requirements for the casualty, mortuary, and long-term survivor support provided by the Department of the Air Force:

-  DoD Directive 1300.22, *Mortuary Affairs Policy*
Relevant Policy: [Mortuary Affairs program](#)
-  DoD Instruction 1300.18, *Department of Defense Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies and Procedures*
Relevant Policy: [Casualty Program](#)
-  DoD Instruction 1300.15, *Military Funeral Support*
Relevant Policy: [Mortuary Affairs program](#)
-  DoDI 1300.29, *Mortuary Affairs Program*
Relevant Policy: [Mortuary Affairs program](#)
-  Air Force Instruction 34-501, *Mortuary Affairs Program*
Relevant Policy: [Air Force Mortuary Affairs program](#)
-  Air Force Instruction 36-3002, *Casualty Services Program*
Relevant Policy: [Air Force Casualty program](#)
-  Air Force Instruction 36-3009, *Airman and Family Readiness Centers*
Relevant Policy: [Air Force Families Forever program](#)
-  Air Force Instruction 34-101, *AF Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility*
Relevant Policy: [MWR access for surviving family members](#)
-  Air Force Manual 31-101, *Volume 3, Installation Perimeter Access Control*
Relevant Policy: [Installation access for surviving family members](#)
-  Air Force Instruction 11-209, *Participation in Aerial Events*
Relevant Policy: [Policy on flyovers](#)
-  AFI 36-2910, *Line of Duty (LOD) Determination, Medical Continuation (MEDCON), and Incapacitation (INCAP) Pay*
Relevant Policy: [Policy on Line of Duty Determination](#)
-  AFI 90-5001, *Integrated Resilience*
Relevant Policy: [Post-suicide guidance](#)

DEFINING SURVIVORS

Family members of a deceased Airman or Guardian will be eligible for various support based on elections made by the Airman or simply their relationship to the Airman. The survivor categories listed below will be supported in the event of a member’s death in various capacities and is covered in more depth throughout this guide.

As a commander, you are responsible for ensuring survivors are taken care of immediately following a death, connected with appropriate resources, and also, working with your Air Force Families Forever representative, ensuring the Next Of Kin stay connected to the Air Force or Space Force forever and honoring and remembering their Airman or Guardian.



Survivor Designations

Primary Next of Kin (PNOK)*

The person most closely related to the casualty is considered PNOK and is determined IAW AFI 36-3002.

- The PNOK may be a Spouse.
- In the absence of a spouse, the eldest child.
- In the absence of a spouse/child(ren) the custodial parent or eldest parent.
- In the absence of a spouse, child(ren) or parents, the eldest sibling is the PNOK.

Designation: Based on marriage or hierarchy of blood relationship

Secondary Next of Kin (SNOK)*

Secondary Next of Kin are the relatives, other than the Primary Next of Kin, and include:

Children: each child, stepchild, and adopted child

Parents: each parent (mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, mother through adoption, father through adoption, and foster parents who stood in loco parentis)

Siblings: each brother, each sister, each half-brother, each half sister

Designation: Based on relationship

Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD)*

Makes decisions regarding disposition of remains.

Note: Some states do not recognize the DD-93 (PADD) and follow a legal next-of-kin (PNOK) order as it relates to directing disposition. Refer to the Mortuary Officer for questions or concerns in these cases.

Designation: DD Form 93, Record of Emergency Data (vRED). If member failed to designate a PADD, the PNOK is the PADD.

Person Eligible to Receive Effects (PERE)*

This role is to determine who receives the property from the Department of the Air Force (DAF). Ownership of property is determined by other civil statutes. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) does not declare ownership.

Designation: The PNOK is the PERE.

Designated recipient(s) of benefits or entitlements who are not NOK

Receive notification of Airman or Guardian’s death. Those designated and/or eligible to receive a benefit or entitlement receive casualty assistance.

Designation: DD Form 93, Record of Emergency Data (vRED) or as a beneficiary of SGLI.



****There is a specific legal order under federal law, which determines the PNOK and the PADD. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is bound by this legal order, regardless of personal feelings or family situations.***

Survivor Categories

Survivors may be identified as Gold Star, Peacetime, or Past Conflict. The total population of survivors can be referenced as “Gold Star and Surviving Family Members” or “survivors”. *While there are different benefits and entitlements for survivors based on their eligibility, relationship to their Airman or Guardian, or when an Airman or Guardian died, the **support and connections to resources** provided to each survivor is NOT differentiated.*

Gold Star and Surviving Family Members

Gold Star

- ▶ Family member of Airman or Guardian who died while engaged in combat or military conflict with an opposing foreign force or as a result of an international terrorist attack against the US
- ▶ Eligible to receive the Gold Star Lapel Button
- ▶ Eligible to request installation access



Peacetime

- ▶ Family member of Airman or Guardian who died under any circumstance, other than defined as Gold Star, while on Active Duty or “in a duty status” Guard or Reserve Airman
- ▶ Eligible to receive the Next-of Kin Lapel Button
- ▶ Eligible to request installation access



Past Conflict

- ▶ Family member of Airmen who are unaccounted-for from our Nation’s Past Conflicts (i.e., Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam War, and other operations)
- ▶ Supported in part by the Past Conflicts branch within the AF Casualty division and Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations. The Past Conflicts branch is the liason between the Defense Prisoner of War/ Missing in Action Accounting Agency (DPAA) and past conflict survivors
- ▶ May be eligible to attend DPAA hosted family update meetings throughout the country
- ▶ Eligible to receive the Gold Star Lapel Button
- ▶ Eligible to request installation access



OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of the three programs which provide immediate and long-term support to the family members who lost an Airman or Guardian. While each function provides different services, the overall goal is to support surviving family members.

Casualty Program

The primary goals of the Air Force Casualty program are: prompt casualty reporting, dignified and humane survivor notifications, and efficient, thorough, and compassionate casualty assistance to survivors and designated/eligible recipients of casualty benefits and entitlements.

Overview of Casualty Benefits and Entitlements



Death Gratuity

\$100,000 payable to the designated recipient(s) on the RED/DD93 or By Law upon the death of a member in a duty status. The \$100,000 can be divided in as little as \$10,000 increments for payment.



Servicemen's group life insurance

\$400,000 in automatic life insurance coverage upon accession. However, members can elect to have reduced coverage in \$50,000 increments, up to the maximum of \$400,000. Members may also decline coverage.



Family Servicemen's Group Life Insurance

- Spousal Coverage
- Mil to Mil Spouses - Up to \$100,000 in coverage. However, since 2013, Mil to Mil couples must elect spousal coverage.
 - Mil to Civilian Spouses – \$100,000 in automatic life insurance coverage upon accession/marriage. However, members can elect to reduce coverage in \$10,000 increments, up to \$100,000. But the Spousal coverage cannot exceed the members coverage (e.g. Member elected \$50,000 in SGLI, therefore the Spouse can have no more than \$50,000 in FSGLI)

Child coverage - \$10,000 in automatic life insurance coverage upon accession or at birth. There is no cost for child coverage. Coverage also extends to fetuses whose: (1) whose fetal weight is 350 grams or more; or (2) if the fetal weight is unknown, whose duration in utero was 20 or more completed weeks of gestation, calculated from the date the last normal menstrual period began to the date of expulsion, extraction, or delivery.



Unpaid pay and allowances

- The settlement of pay due the member from the last time paid to the date of death
- Any eligible bonuses
- 365 days of Basic Allowance for housing for spouses and eligible dependents.



Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

A tax free monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors of military service members who died **in the line of duty** or eligible survivors of Veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease (120-day Retiree/Separatee death, when deemed service related by the Veterans Administration).



Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP)

A taxable annuity paid to an eligible dependent of members in an active duty status whose death was ruled ***in the line of duty***. If the member is eligible for retirement at time of death but the death is ruled ***not in the line of duty*** the annuity can be paid as if the member had retired.

For ARC members who die and are not in an active duty status, consult ARPC for specific details regarding status and eligibility.



Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA)

A benefit for surviving spouses who receive a Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity that is offset by a Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payment from the Veterans Administration. In accordance with NDAA 2020 SBP-DIC Offset Repeal this benefit will go away 1 Jan 2023, as there will no longer be an offset.



Social Security

If eligible, a \$255.00 lump-sum death benefit; Surviving spouses/minor children may also be eligible for a monthly benefit, based on lifetime earnings.



DoD ID Card

Spouses and minor children will retain eligibility for DoD ID Cards. Spouses will lose eligibility if remarried. Children will remain eligible if unmarried until the age of 21, or 23 if in college full-time. Children with disabilities may retain eligibility beyond normal age limits.



Medical and Dental benefits

Surviving spouses, who do not remarry, and unmarried children (under age 21 or under age 23, if in college full-time) are eligible for Transitional TRICARE. Children with disabilities may retain eligibility beyond normal age limits.

After three years (transitional period), eligibility remains as a “survivor” at retiree rates under TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Standard, or TRICARE Extra.



Educational Entitlements

Survivors may be eligible for Dependent Education Assistance or the Fry Scholarship through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Each Casualty Assistance Representative(s) (CAR) will discuss eligibility criteria with spouses and children, as applicable.



Base Exchange and Commissary

Those survivors eligible to retain a DoD ID card will retain base exchange and commissary privileges, as well as access to MWR activities.



Note: Payments cannot be made to minor children until guardianship/estate is established to enable the respective paying agency to disburse payments.



DD Form 1300
Report of Casualty

<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd1300.pdf>

POC Responsible:

Casualty Assistance Rep



AF Form 348
Line of Duty Determination

https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/form/af348/af348.pdf

POC Responsible:

Commander, MDG, JA, Approving Official



DD Form 261
Report of Investigation Line of Duty and Misconduct Status

<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd0261.pdf>

POC Responsible:

Investigating Officer, Members Commander, MDG, JA, Approving Official



An Informal LOD determination of **Not in the Line of Duty** may impact the payment of Survivor Benefit Payments (SBP) and/or Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments to survivors, as determined by the paying agency.

Casualty Staff

Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR)

- ▶ The CAR is designated in accordance with AFI 36-3002 and falls under the Force Support Squadron in the Airman and Family Readiness Center. Each installation has a primary and at least one alternate CAR.
- ▶ The CAR is responsible for transmitting casualty reports to the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), and other concerned agencies; briefing casualty notification officers on their duties and responsibilities; and assisting the NOK or other eligible beneficiaries in claiming certain government benefits and entitlements.
- ▶ A CAR is assigned to each person receiving a casualty benefit or entitlement. The assigned CAR is located at the Air Force base closest to the person receiving the benefit or entitlement. Therefore, several CARs may be assigned to one case.
- ▶ The CAR will provide you with updates as they carry out their duties to ensure you are aware of any challenges/issues.
- ▶ During their casualty assistance briefings, CARs address benefits and entitlements. These may be payable by various agencies: DFAS, Social Security Administration, Department of Veteran Affairs, miscellaneous benefits (commercial life insurance, credit union, banks, etc.), and educational assistance. The CAR will also secure signatures on applicable claim forms to file for the benefits and entitlements each eligible or designated recipient is to receive. The receipt of the death certificate, DD Form-1300, Report of Casualty, and Line of Duty determination are critical to the timeliness of filing for some benefits and entitlements (i.e., SGLI/FSGLI, SBP, and DIC)

Air Force Casualty Operations

Air Force Personnel Center, Joint Base San Antonio, TX



- ▶ Air Force Casualty provides policy, training and operational control over all phases of the worldwide program.
- ▶ Provides technical and specialized assistance at installation or major commands (MAJCOMs) regarding policy, training, operations, and other casualty related concerns or requests for information (statistics).
- ▶ May be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assist commanders, CARs, and others who require support. Coordinate with your CAR/Casualty Augmentation Support Team (CAST) in reaching out to Air Force Casualty. This is of critical importance when determining the appropriate casualty status to place a member in when challenging circumstances exist: over water loss (no remains recovered), fire, etc. and it is not immediately clear the appropriate casualty category, i.e., Deceased, Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN), or Missing.

Mortuary Affairs Program

The primary goal of the Mortuary Affairs program is to fulfill the nation’s sacred commitment of ensuring dignity, honor, and respect to the fallen and care, service, and support to their families. The Mortuary Affairs program provides funeral, burial and entitlements, memorial service arrangements, military funeral honors, headstone and memorial marker program information, search and recovery (S&R) operations, identification, viewability of remains and Body Not Recovered (BNR) entitlements (for Airmen whose remains are not recovered – e.g., over water loss and past conflicts).

Overview of Mortuary Benefits and Entitlements



Unit Memorial Service

If a unit memorial service is held, the location is limited to the last permanent duty station of the deceased Airman or Guardian, excluding any combat theaters of operation. The installation commander determines whether or not a unit memorial service will be held. If held, the family members’ entitlement is limited to paid travel for attendance at one unit memorial service.

If death was by suicide, see [Appendix A: Unit Memorials for Death by Suicide](#).



Body Not Recovered Memorial Service

A memorial service that is held for an Airman or Guardian whose remains are not recovered following declaration of death and which reimbursement for expenses associated with a memorial service is authorized (10 U.S.C. Section 1482).



Preparation of Remains (Primary Expenses)

- Embalming
- Clothing: Service Dress Uniform, Flight Suit (when authorized), Civilian Clothing
- Casket: 18-Gauge Metal Protective (Silver) or Solid Hardwood
- Urn (if cremation desired): Solid Bronze or Hardwood



Secondary Expenses

- Basic minimum services of funeral director & staff; receiving remains service charge
- Use of facilities for viewing or visitation, staff for viewing or visitation held elsewhere
- Use of funeral home chapel or staff for funeral or memorial service held elsewhere
- Graveside service charge
- Cemetery equipment
- Funeral and memorial service
- Inurnment



Transportation of Remains

- Commercial Air
- Contract Mil Air from Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations (AFMAO) (for service members who die in Overseas Contingency Operations)
- Hearse



Escort

Only **ONE ESCORT** is authorized to accompany the remains or to hand carry the cremated remains of a deceased active duty military member entitled to full mortuary entitlements to the final destination. The escort may accompany the remains on commercial flights from OCONUS location to final destination.

- **Special Escort:** The PADD may request, by name, a current active duty member of the military from any branch of Service and of any rank to be the escort. Guard or Reserve members may be authorized if currently serving on orders.
- **Appointed Escort:** When the PADD does not specifically request a military member by name to serve as the escort, the Mortuary Officer, in conjunction with the commander of the unit of the deceased, will designate a military member of equal or higher rank than the decedent to escort the remains.



***Note:** Only ONE escort is authorized. The unit of the deceased member should not insert themselves into this process. The freedom to make an independent decision regarding the escort is paramount.*



Family Member Travel

Travel is authorized to attend the funeral and unit memorial services for the spouse, children, parents (of deceased member and spouse of the deceased member), siblings, and the PADD.

Please contact partner Non-Governmental Organization, such as the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), for consideration of travel support for other survivors not otherwise covered.



Full Military Honors

- Officer in Charge (OIC) or Non- Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC)
- Pallbearers
- Firing Party
- Bugler
- Color Guard
- Chaplain (If NOK Desires, and available)
- Flyover (See [Appendix B: Flyover Request](#) for eligibility and request for exception to policy process)



Flags and Hardwood Flag Case

Flags and hardwood flag cases are presented to the spouse, children, parents of the member (one if married/two if divorced), and PADD (if the PADD is other than those listed). The preparing or shipping installation will provide the flag to drape the casket. See also [Appendix C: Protocol for Presenting the United States Flag](#).

A DoD-furnished U.S. flag is not authorized for members who are denied Military Funeral Honors.



Government Furnished Headstone

Provided by the Veterans Administration (VA). If requested and eligible, the VA will furnish an appropriate government headstone or marker for the grave of a member who is buried in a government or private cemetery. (For more see: (<https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/>))



National or State Veterans Cemetery Gravesite

Eligibility and availability is determined by the cemetery or the National Cemetery Scheduling Office

Documents and Reports



Autopsy Report

The autopsy report must be requested by NOK in order to obtain. For Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) cases, the AFMES Form 3 must be completed and submitted. Other jurisdictions (county/state) have varying requirements.

POC Responsible:

AFMES – For AFMES cases

Local ME or coroner – For local jurisdiction



Death Certificate

DD Form 2064 (for AFMES cases) or State (vital statistics) generated form. PNOK is provided fifteen (15) certified copies of the Death Certificate (AFMES or State).

POC Responsible:

Mortuary Officer



Mortuary Affairs Staff

Mortuary Officer and Alternates

- ▶ The installation Mortuary Officer and at least one alternate Mortuary Officer is appointed by the Force Support Squadron (FSS) commander in accordance with AFI 34-501. Typically, the base Mortuary Officer is the FSS Operations Officer.
 - o The FSS commander/civilian leader, deputy commander/director and others can serve as alternate Mortuary Officers.
- ▶ Administers and executes the program for the installation commander.
- ▶ All deaths will be reported to the Mortuary Officer by the local authorities, base hospital, base command post, security police, commanders, or whoever first learns of the death.
- ▶ Responsible for the administration and operation of all activities related to the Mortuary Affairs Program.
 - o Briefing the person authorized to direct disposition (PADD) on mortuary entitlements
 - o Team leader for search and recovery of remains of personnel from accidents or disasters
 - o Entitlements related to funeral home arrangements including burial or cremation
 - o Transportation of remains to the final resting place
 - o Disposition of personal property through the Summary Courts Officer (SCO)
 - o Provides the escort a briefing on responsibilities and provides respective paperwork and guides to carry out their duties
 - o Oversees Installation Commander appointment of the SCO
 - o Military funeral honors

Summary Courts Officer (SCO)

- ▶ The SCO is a commissioned officer appointed on orders (Special Orders Series A) by the installation commander (who has summary court martial authority), pursuant to AFI 34-502, Disposition of Personal Property and Effects
 - o The selection of a SCO may be from any base organization, but is typically from the losing unit and the wing commander works with the unit commander to determine a suitable individual.
 - o The SCO should be removed from all other duties and responsibilities until all actions are complete.
- ▶ Collects, safeguards, and promptly disposes of property belonging to the deceased at the time of their death.
- ▶ Assists the PERE through procedures necessary to close out a member's military service.
- ▶ The SCO obtains property disposition instructions and the name and address of the authorized recipient from the Mortuary Officer.
- ▶ Will secure, inventory, package, and ship personal property to the authorized recipient.
- ▶ Will turn in military identification, other military documents and equipment, and dispose of mail, personal papers, funds, and negotiable instruments.

Family Assistance Representative (FAR)

- ▶ The FAR is assigned to the PADD; however, he/she can decline their assistance or support. If the PADD and PNOK are not the same person, a second FAR may be appointed on a case-by-case basis.
- ▶ The FAR is recommended to wing/installation commanders by unit commanders of the deceased. FARs may be Officers or Senior Noncommissioned Officers (E-7 or higher). (AFI 34-501, *Mortuary Affairs Program*)
- ▶ The FAR should be knowledgeable of protocols, willing to and emotionally and mentally prepared to assist the family.
- ▶ Just-in-time training for the FAR is provided by the Mortuary Officer.
- ▶ The FAR is expected to make contact with the assigned families on a frequent (daily, bi-weekly) basis until the Airman has been laid to rest.
 - o There are cases where FAR may be required/necessary for a longer period (i.e. investigation pending), however, contact may be intermittent and by phone.
 - o The Mortuary Officer officially signs off on the termination of the FAR.
- ▶ Will facilitate the families' connection with other Air Force personnel (Casualty Affairs, Mortuary Affairs, TMO, etc.) and work with other supporting military personnel as needed for entitlements related business with the Air Force.
- ▶ Will facilitate a warm connection with all military survivors to partner NGO's to include the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) for 24/7 connection to peer-based emotional support and additional resources.
- ▶ The FAR's role is to help facilitate communications between the survivors, subject matter experts, and investigators. They will not attempt to perform the duties of other functions or subject matter experts described above but will serve as the liaison directing questions and concerns to appropriate Air Force personnel from the needs of the survivors.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE DOVER AIR FORCE BASE



Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations (AFMAO)

Dover AFB, DE

- ▶ The SCO is a commissioned officer appointed on orders (Special Orders Series A) by the installation commander (who has summary court martial authority), pursuant to AFI 34-502, Disposition of Personal Property and Effects
 - The selection of a SCO may be from any base organization, but is typically from the losing unit and the wing commander works with the unit commander to determine a suitable individual.
 - The SCO should be removed from all other duties and responsibilities until all actions are complete.
- ▶ Collects, safeguards, and promptly disposes of property belonging to the deceased at the time of their death.
- ▶ Assists the PERE through procedures necessary to close out a member's military service.
- ▶ The SCO obtains property disposition instructions and the name and address of the authorized recipient from the Mortuary Officer.
- ▶ Will secure, inventory, package, and ship personal property to the authorized recipient.
- ▶ Will turn in military identification, other military documents and equipment, and dispose of mail, personal papers, funds, and negotiable instruments.

Air Force Families Forever Program

Air Force Families Forever (AFFF) is the Air Force's long-term survivor program as required by law in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, Public Law 113-66, Sec 633. AFFF provides support to family members of deceased RegAF, Guardians, and ARC Airmen who died in an Active Duty, Inactive Duty for Training (IDT), or Annual Training (AT) status and whose relationship was established prior to the member's death. Support to eligible NOK is provided through the Airman & Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) at installations closest to where the survivor resides.

AFFF Support

Each active duty A&FRC has appointed a staff member as the AFFF point of contact (POC) to support installation leadership and survivors. Support provided to eligible survivors is categorized into information and referral or connection and remembrance.

Information and Referral

Surviving family members may have questions or need assistance outside of the A&FRC. For these requests, information and referral will be used to assist survivors getting the answers or support they need. Referrals may be internal to the Department of the Air Force (i.e. the CAR) or external (i.e. local chapter of a non-profit). External referrals can accommodate survivors who are not DoD ID card holders (a DBIDS installation access card does not qualify as a DoD ID card):

DoD ID card holders: Survivors who are DoD ID card holders are eligible to participate in A&FRC programs (i.e. relocation assistance, financial counseling, employment support, etc.).

Non-DoD ID card holders: Survivors who are non-DoD ID card holders may receive information and referral for support outside of the Center provided by local, state, national, and non-governmental organizations (i.e. financial counseling, bereavement counseling, legal assistance, etc.). Exception: Non-DoD ID card holder surviving family members may be referred to the CAR.

Connection and Remembrance

Ensuring surviving family members feel part of the Department of the Air Force family is a cornerstone of this program. This is accomplished through efforts to connect survivors to the Air Force or Space Force, as well as each other, and to remember their Airman or Guardian. All surviving family members should be extended the opportunity to attend installation events and honor their Service Member during recognition or memorial ceremonies. Commanders are encouraged to promote participation at both installation and community events as an opportunity to connect with other surviving family members

Quarterly Reports for Wing Leadership

To assist commanders and leadership in connecting with our survivors and remembering our fallen Airmen and Guardians, A&FRCs will provide installation commanders with information on surviving family members who are connected with AFFF and encourage inclusion of surviving family members in base events (squadron, group, and wing levels). Quarterly reports to installation leadership will include the following:

- Name of survivor
- Survivor's contact information
- Name of fallen Member
- Survivor's relationship to Member
- Member's date of death
- Member's unit at the time of death
- If survivor has opted out of communication

Installation Access

The Electronic Physical Assess Control System (ePACS) for the AF is Defense Biometric Identification System (DBIDS). The purpose of the DBIDS card is recognition and installation access for Gold Star and Surviving Family Members to facilitate connection and remembrance. Installation access cards are issued in partnership with the installation Visitor Control Center (VCC).

Survivor DBIDS card

- Provides 24/7 access to the installation where it is obtained
- To access additional AF installations, DBIDS card must be registered at each installation's VCC
- Expires three years from date of card issue (indefinite renewals)
- May be used for access to Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) activities on the installation*
- Cannot be used to escort or sponsor other individuals
- Cannot be used to access the installation above FPCON Bravo
- Cannot be used for access BX, medical, and commissary

*Per AFI 34-101, AF Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Programs and Use Eligibility, survivors are authorized limited use of Force Support resiliency and readiness activities and programs at the discretion of the installation commander. Installation commanders are encouraged to generate a listing of approved MWR activities for surviving family members at each installation.

Air Force Families Forever Staff

Air Force Families Forever Representative

- ▶ Serves as installation level point of contact for surviving family members' long-term support
- ▶ Works with the CAR to facilitate a warm connection/introduction with AFFF and NOK (Note: not all survivors will have a CAR)
- ▶ Links all survivors to resources, information, and assistance with a variety of issues family members may have
- ▶ Refers survivors to other AF, A&FRC, or local community services as applicable
- ▶ Provides timely outreach via phone, mail, email or in-person, as prescribed in this guide
 - o Promotes ongoing connection with the AF family by ensuring NOK are aware of installation events and approved local/AF social media outlets
- ▶ Sponsors family member in obtaining DBIDS card for installation access
- ▶ Creates and maintains an email distribution list of local surviving family members
- ▶ Facilitates connection between all survivors and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) by either calling the TAPS 24/7 Helpline 800.959.TAPS(8277) or emailing USAF@taps.org.
- ▶ Collaborates with installation CAR to confirm survivors receive Gold Star and/or NOK Lapel Buttons

Air Force Families Forever Operations

Air Force Personnel Center, Joint Base San Antonio, TX

- Develops and provides operational guidance and training to installation A&FRC personnel and establishes program effectiveness measures
- Provides assistance/support to installations and MAJCOMs on the AFFF program
- Provides consultation and guidance to A&FRC personnel for challenging cases or matters pertaining to the AFFF program
- Performs program analysis to ensure timely outreach and engagement are accomplished according to policy
- Assigns surviving family members to the A&FRCs nearest to where they reside
- Administers AFPC's social media/website information regarding long-term survivor support
- Serves as liaison between Air Force (AF) and the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), as governed by Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

SURVIVOR CARE TEAM

The Survivor Care Team consists of all the team members who provide the immediate and long-term support to the family (as defined in the *Defining Survivors* section) of a deceased Airman or Guardian. Each member of the survivor care team provides support to the family based on their role, but it is imperative the team communicates and works together to provide cohesive support to the family. Note that not all of the Survivor Care Team members are located at your base. CARs and AFFF representatives are assigned to family members at the base closest to the family member's residence.

Survivor Care Team Members



*From the Airman or Guardian's home station
**ALL assigned staff to all NOK, not just those at the home station

As the commander, your role on the Survivor Care Team is to be aware of the actions taken with the survivors by each member of the Survivor Care Team in order to best support the survivors. The Survivor Care Team is there to provide you with information related to their support to survivors of our fallen Airman or Guardian.



Example Case

The following scenario provides an example of a family and the Survivor Care Team that would be in place to support the family. The example highlights the complexity of the team and communication as the members cross several bases – all supporting the same family.

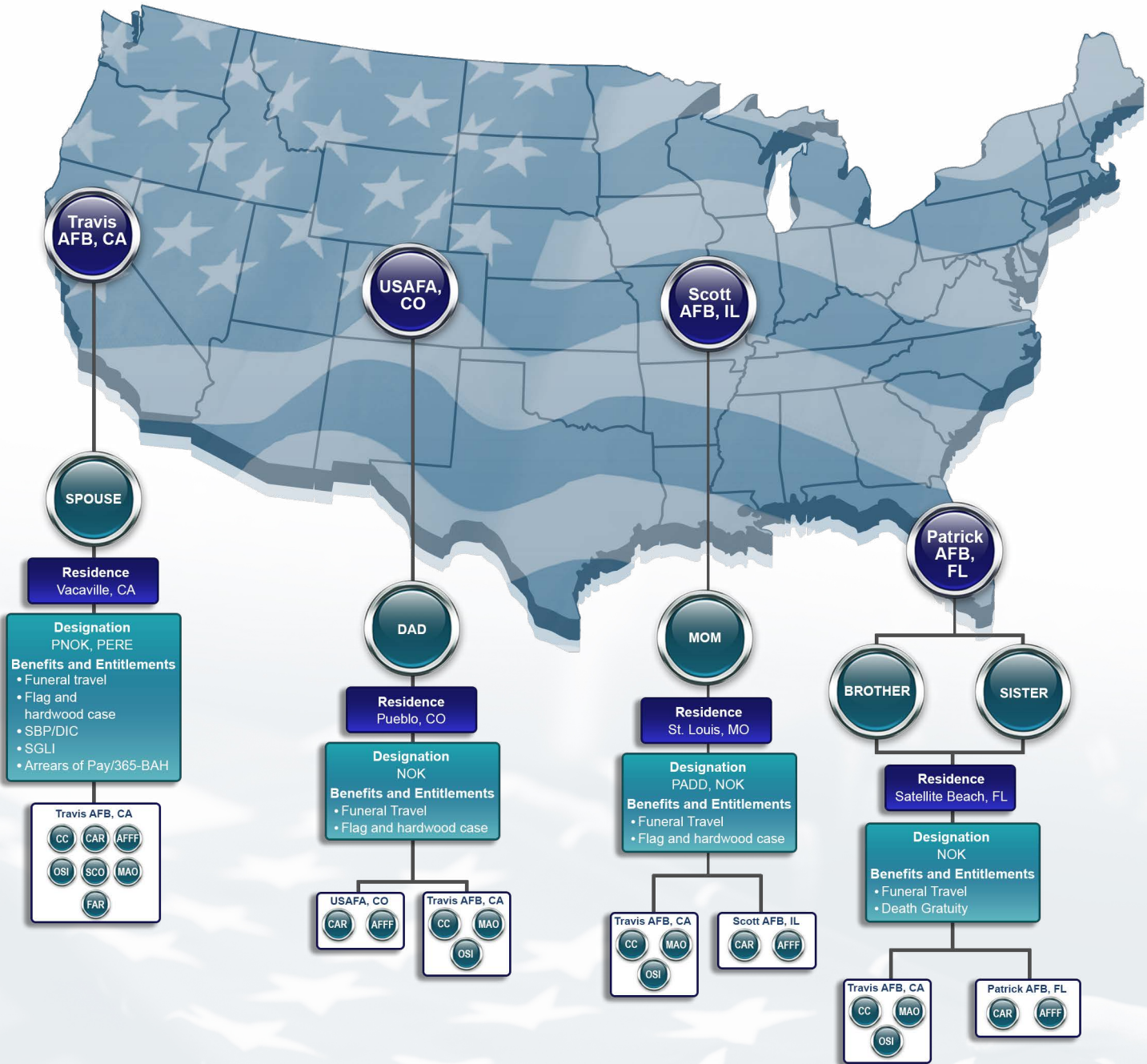


Scenario

Airman stationed at Travis AFB dies in the vicinity of Travis AFB. Airman has a spouse and two small children. His parents are divorced and he has a brother and a sister.

SURVIVOR CARE TEAM (Cont.)

Example Survivor Care Team



LOSING AN AIRMAN OR GUARDIAN TIMELINE

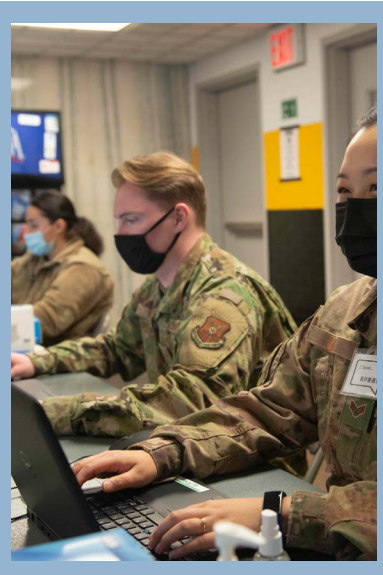
This section will detail the timeline, in many cases driven by law and policy, which you can expect once the death of an Airman or Guardian is confirmed.

0
HRS

CAR learns of a confirmed death

The Department of the Air Force (Command Post, Commander/1st Sergeant, Casualty Affairs Representative, Mortuary Officer, etc.) can learn of the death of an Airman in a duty status (AD, IDT, AT) from many sources including: local hospitals, law enforcement, medical examiner/coroner/Justice of the Peace, etc. If you or your unit leadership team are contacted about a death by anyone other than the Command Post, you must contact the CAR to ensure they are informed to enable the remainder of casualty processes to be executed. The Command Post will generate operations reports and inform all parties identified in their checklist.

If you are contacted by a family member inquiring about the member's status, prior to the family member receiving official notification, see [Appendix D: Call from Family Prior to Notification](#) for guidelines on how to handle the call.



1
HR

CAR provides a heads-up call

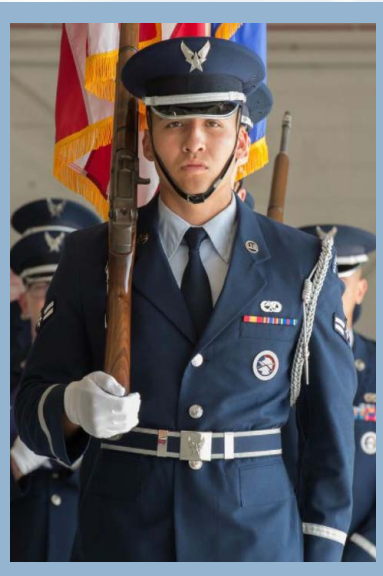
CAR provides a heads-up call to Air Force Casualty of a confirmed loss while compiling data to enable submission of the casualty report.

4
HRS

CAR submits initial Casualty Report

CAR submits initial Casualty Report to AFPC Casualty within 4 hours of learning of death.

Those listed on the RED/DD93, the spouse, children not residing with the spouse, and parents, as well as those designated to receive benefits/entitlements are notified in person of the death. Notification is made by a notification officer (Field Grade Officer). All squadron commanders or their qualified officers designees may serve as notification officers. The Notification Officer will be accompanied by at least one other uniformed member. A chaplain and, if determined appropriate, a medical representative, may be the second member of the notification team. If those to be notified live in the local area, the member's commander, or his/her designee, will make in-person notification. For NOK residing away from the home station, Air Force Casualty Office (HQ



LOSING AN AIRMAN OR GUARDIAN TIMELINE (Cont.)

AFPC/DPFCS) will task the Air Force asset, in closest proximity to the person to be notified, with executing the notification. Notifications must be made within 12 hours after receiving casualty report.

AFMAO receives initial casualty report, confirms member's duty status (Active/Entitled), and assigns the mortuary officer and technician to the installation closest to the remains as primary responsibility for the mortuary case. The assignment is sent via email and includes guidance and documents (Initial casualty report, vRED, SURF, etc).

Family Assistance Representative (FAR) should be identified within 12 hours.

12
HRS

Commanders should consider calling the unit in to advise of the loss and the Disaster Mental Health team. Also, consider a communication blackout to keep information getting out via social media or other means before families are officially notified.



HAF Senior leaders receive loss alert via OPREP from AF Watch.

The CAR(s) will contact those survivors receiving benefits/entitlements within 24-hours to schedule a time to meet survivors at a time convenient to the survivor.

The Mortuary Officer may learn of the death through similar channels as the CAR. Once notification has been made to the PADD, the CAR will advise the Mortuary Officer that the PADD has been notified and the Mortuary Officer will schedule the Mortuary Entitlements (PADD) briefing.

Orders and training should be completed within 24-hours of the Family Assistance Representative being identified.

In the event of an aircraft or hi-vis incident, we recommend Public Affairs delay confirming numbers of casualties involved; type of aircraft, if feasible; unit of assignment or grade. Any of these details shrinks the population pool and can create panic among families who have loved ones assigned to the location of loss fitting the demographic of details prematurely released.

LOSING AN AIRMAN OR GUARDIAN TIMELINE

24
HRS

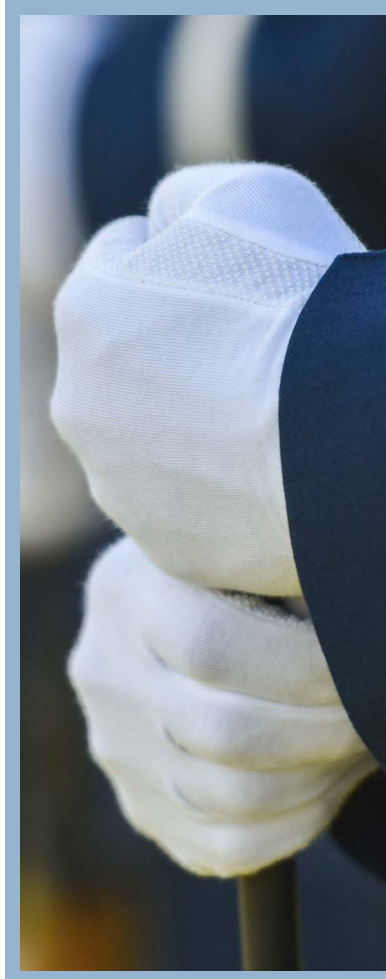
Line of Duty Initiated – In accordance with AFI 36-2910, Line of Duty (LOD) Determination, Medical Continuation (MEDCON), and Incapacitation (INCAP) Pay, Military Medical Providers, Commanders, and Staff Judge Advocates (SJA) are responsible in ensuring that an LOD determination is completed. The FSS Line of Duty Program Monitor will ensure the LOD is initiated and track until completion. Unit leadership is instrumental in the success of this process to ensure LOD impacting payments are not delayed, when found In the Line of Duty.

Recovery of Remains – It is the Mortuary Officer's responsibility to determine the location of the fallen (hospital, medical examiner/morgue, search and rescue required) and, with the aid of the local contract funeral home (if applicable), procure the release of the remains. This can be accomplished several different ways depending on circumstances of death and where the death occurred. If death occurred off base, remains may be under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

Secure Personal Property – The Mortuary Officer, working with the unit commander, security forces, or local civil authorities if off base, will need to ensure that the member's personal property is safeguarded and secure. This could include offices, workspaces, vehicles, or quarters on or off base.

Appoint Summary Courts Officer – The installation commander will appoint a SCO. The Mortuary Officer will brief the SCO on his/her duties and responsibilities. The SCO will need permission to enter any quarters off base. The Mortuary Officer will work with the SCO and Travel Management Office (TMO) personnel to make sure all personal property is shipped to the Person Eligible to Receive Effects (PERE) or location they designate.

Mortuary Entitlements Briefing – Once positive identification has been established, the Mortuary Officer will arrange his/her official mortuary briefing with the PADD. If a search and recovery operation is ongoing, the Mortuary Officer will need to stay in contact daily with the PADD to brief on search and recovery operations. Although the Mortuary Officer is in contact with the PADD, typically the full mortuary briefing does not occur until positive identification is made, especially with deaths as a result of aircraft incidents with multiple fatalities. Once the full mortuary briefing is completed, and decisions made in writing by the PADD, the Mortuary Officer can proceed with carrying out the disposition instructions (i.e., working with government mortuary/contract funeral home, as well as the funeral home when the Fallen will be shipped, cemetery, remains transportation, escorts, family travel, etc.).



LOSING AN AIRMAN OR GUARDIAN TIMELINE (Cont.)

BEYOND
24
HRS

Unit Memorial – The installation commander must approve a unit memorial and if family members are invited. See [Appendix A: Communicating Suspected Death by Suicide and Unit Memorials](#) for guidance on a unit memorial if death by suicide.

Transportation of Remains/Escort – The Mortuary Officer will arrange for transportation of remains per policy and the PADD's wishes as well as travel for the escort.

Dignified Transfer (AOR Deaths Only) – In cases where an Member dies in a declared Combat Theater of Operations, the remains are returned through Dover AFB. The Primary Next of Kin (PNOK) and two additional travelers (named by the PNOK) elect to travel to Dover AFB to witness the Dignified Transfer. The Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) delegates to the AFMAO Commander the approval authority to expand eligible family member travel, beyond the PNOK and two additional travelers, to attend the Dignified Transfer.

The PNOK may elect to exclude or authorize media access to capture the Dignified Transfer. The Media Coverage can include either DoD photography and videography coverage or public media or both (personal photography is prohibited).

Remains transported from AFMAO will be accomplished by one of three modes of conveyance:

1. Military air or military-contracted aircraft (AOR deaths only)
2. Commercial aircraft
3. Hearse

Funeral – Military funeral honors are authorized for active duty personnel, retirees, Air Reserve Component (ARC) members, and veterans. The Mortuary Officer will work with the honor guard from the closest installation at final destination to perform honors. There are some circumstances that may warrant denial of honors (AF/A1 is the SecAF designated authority to deny honors). If you believe circumstances surrounding a death may meet this criteria, the Mortuary Officer will contact AFMAO for guidance. Note: There is no policy which precludes individuals from receiving a military funeral with full honors if the individual died as a result of suicide.

Entitlements for Mortuary Services – The Mortuary Officer and their technician will handle all entitlements dealing with expenses associated with funeral services and entitled family member travel. The Mortuary Officer will work directly with the PADD to ensure they are comfortable with their decisions. Direction will be in the form of written, signed documents.

Interment – The PADD may choose to have their loved one interred in a private or national/state veteran's cemetery. If they choose a veteran's cemetery the commander will need to prepare a statement of good standing for the member. A template is provided in [Appendix E: Statement of Good Standing](#).

Investigations – Investigations conducted by the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) or an Accident Investigation Board can take up to 6-12 months.

Air Force Families Forever Outreach

Air Force Families Forever conducts targeted outreach to surviving family members for the first 24 months after a death and then quarterly thereafter. Survivors are able to opt-out of communication at any time.



COMMANDER'S CHECKLIST

COMMANDER'S CHECKLIST (Cont.)

- ☐ 1
- Contact local law enforcement/Security Forces, AFOSI, and 911 (situation dependent). AFOSI Duty Agent can be contacted after hours through the Law Enforcement Desk or Command Post.
- ☐ 2
- Notify First Sergeant, Command Post and Chain of Command. Command Post will initiate Operational Reporting (OPREP) messages. (Command Post will notify the Casualty Assistance Rep (CAR) and Mortuary Affairs.)
- ☐ 3
- Notify your supporting PERSCO or Casualty Assistance Rep (CAR) immediately upon learning/confirming a casualty in your unit.
- If you are contacted by a family member inquiring about the Airman's status, prior to the family member receiving official notification, see [Appendix D: Call from Family Prior to Notification](#) for guidelines on how to handle the call.
- ☐ 4
- Control information and rumors while family members are being notified – prior to NOK notification(s), the death should be considered “close hold” and only those who have an official need to know should be informed.
- Recommend unit-wide communication blackout to enable the official casualty notification process to work.
- ☐ 5
- Obtain Survivor Care Team Rep names/contact info from the CAR. The Survivor Care Team consists of the following: CAR(s), Mortuary Officer, Air Force Families Forever (AFFF) Rep, Family Assistance Rep (FAR), Summary Courts Officer (SCO), and OSI liaison. Track the Survivor Care Team using [Appendix E: Support Contact Information](#).
- Participate in Survivor Care Team meetings to stay abreast of the latest case information.
- ☐ 6
- Submit FAR for approval by Wing/CC (FAR must be appointed within 12 hours of notification of death in accordance with AFI 34-501). Timeliness is key as FAR may be required to travel to Dover with family (AOR deaths only).
- ☐ 7
- Obtain accurate surviving family members' names/contact info from the Survivor Care Team. If you know or learn of a family member not identified by the Survivor Care Team, please notify the team.

- ☐ 8
- Energize squadron support network (key spouse program, meal train, etc.)
- Family members are not going to know what to ask for—both immediately and longer term. Make specific offers/asks with options for what support looks like (meals, pet care, child care, etc). Don't be offended if they say they do not want it or push you away. Don't offer help just once – if help isn't initially accepted, revisit again. Keep checking in weeks and months later.
- ☐ 9
- Initiate Line of Duty in accordance with AFI 36-2910. Stay engaged with the FSS CC, MDG, and JA until completion (certain benefits and entitlements are tied to completion of LOD and may impact family members).
- ☐ 10
- Notify the unit:
- When notifications to the family are complete, consult with the Disaster Mental Health team or on-call Mental Health provider (particularly in the case of a suspected suicide) to tell the unit what happened.
 - Recommend having resources such as the Chaplain, Disaster Mental Health (DMH) Team or Reserve Component equivalent, and Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC) present.
 - Make initial announcement to work site with a balance of “need to know” and rumor control.
 - If death is a suspected suicide, see [Appendix A: Communicating Suspected Suicide and Unit Memorials](#) for additional guidance on communicating with the unit.
 - Utilize or refer grieving co-workers to the Community Action Team (CAT) community-based resources. For Military beneficiaries, consider Mental Health, Chaplain, Airman & Family Readiness, and Military OneSource (1-800-342-9647). For civilians, consider Employee Assistance Program and follow-up services through DMH (consult with DMH team chief on details, if needed). If non-beneficiaries (i.e., extended family members, fiancé or boy/girlfriends) are struggling and asking for help, refer them to community-based services and/or discuss options with a mental health consultant or competent medical authority.
- ☐ 11
- If death is suspected suicide, consult with Public Affairs regarding public statements about the suicide and request the Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) for Suicide Prevention.

COMMANDER'S CHECKLIST (Cont.)

- ☐ 12 Senior Leader Condoling: To enable Department of Air Force senior leading condoling (Air Force and Space Force), with assistance from the CAR, commanders will:
 - By close of business of the 1st duty day following the death, provide the CAR 1-2 sentences regarding personal information on the Airman (volunteerism, supporting fellow Airmen, community involvement, etc.) to be used in the senior leader condolence letter.
 - For all deaths outside the AOR/Terrorism and on-duty, CCs will determine if circumstances of death warrant senior leader condoling (ongoing criminal investigation, marital discord, drug/alcohol abuse, etc.). Note: senior leaders will condole all deaths within the AOR / Terrorism and on-duty deaths.
- ☐ 13 Prepare your own condolence/circumstance letter within 5 days. The CAR will assist with templates and reviewing.
- ☐ 14 Call or meet with family members shortly after the completion of notifications.
- ☐ 15 In accordance with AFMAN 36-2806, the CC or designee will present the primary next of kin all decorations earned by the Air Force member but not presented prior to the member's death.
- ☐ 16 Posthumous Decoration (optional, in accordance with AFMAN 36-2806, Awards and Memorialization.)
- ☐ 17 Posthumous Promotion (if authorized per AFI 36-2501 – Officer or AFI 36-2502 – Enlisted)
- ☐ 18 Provide all known family members (spouse, children, parents, and siblings) any documentation/copies of the Airman's medals, awards, special recognition received, etc.
- ☐ 19 Unit Memorial or ceremony (optional). If death is by suicide, see additional guidance on unit memorials in [Appendix A: Communicating Suspected Death by Suicide and Unit Memorials](#)
- ☐ 20 If an Accident Investigation Board is convened, ensure the board president is aware of and communicating with all Next of Kin.

The best way to help the family during this tragic time is to assure the survivors that the life and service of their Airman or Guardian will be remembered. Provide survivors with accurate information and empathetic support for the loss they are going through. Offer survivors choices and listen to their requests. Any questions regarding the death, recovery of remains, search and recovery, funeral services, or benefits and entitlements should be forwarded to the appropriate point of contact (i.e. Casualty Assistance Rep, Mortuary Officer, etc.). Survivors are in a very emotional state and extremely susceptible to experience confusion, irritation, and dissatisfaction. Your role is to assure the family the life and service of their Airman or Guardian will be remembered, and warmly direct questions to the appropriate point of contact to ensure accuracy and completion. Please stay in regular communication with the Survivor Care Team for updates and to ensure follow-through. For more on how to communicate with survivors, see [Appendix G: Talking to Survivors](#).

CHECKLIST FOR COMMANDER OF AN ACTIVE DUTY SURVIVOR

- ☐ 1 Get the latest information from the Survivor Care Team and know who is supporting your surviving Airman or Guardian.
- ☐ 2 Consider a period of non-rating for your Airman or Guardian due to hardship, in accordance with AFI 36-2406, *Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems*.
- ☐ 3 Consider a Humanitarian Reassignment for your Airman or Guardian, in accordance with AFI 36-2110, *Total Force Assignments*.
- ☐ 4 Consider assigning a wingman from the unit to assist the survivor. In the immediacy, a key thing is to eliminate the need for the survivor to drive anywhere (increased safety risk).
- ☐ 5 As much as possible, don't ask them to think about work, whether it be administrative tasks or any project, event, inspection, etc. they are working on at work.
- ☐ 6 As much as possible, don't make the person do paperwork—their chain/you can approve/ route emergency leave. If required, ensure everything is filled out and all that is required is a signature.
- ☐ 7 As much as possible, take any paperwork to them, don't make them come in. They are going to feel like everyone is looking at them and likely that they need to put on a brave face.
- ☐ 8 If it is a media-level event, try to control the rumor mill within the unit, but try to share as much as you can when you are able.



CHECKLIST FOR COMMANDER OF AN ACTIVE DUTY SURVIVOR (Cont.)

- ☐ 11 Energize squadron support network (key spouse program, meal train, etc.).
Family members are not going to know what to ask for—both immediately and longer term. Make specific offers/asks with options for what support looks like (meals, pet care, child care, etc). Don't be offended if they say they do not want it or push you away. Don't offer help just once – if help isn't initially accepted, revisit again. Keep checking in weeks and months later.
- ☐ 12 Ensure someone will help them pack before they travel for the dignified transfer (DT) or funeral. Recommend packing service dress (they can decide later if they/family want them to wear it) and help them prepare their uniform.
- ☐ 13 Stay informed. Regularly ask for updates. Also, give reminders to friends, coworkers, supervisors to check in with them. People have a tendency to forget a few weeks later as the person gets back to work. A reminder to follow up on ways to provide support or just take this person out to lunch to check in.
- ☐ 14 Reference [Appendix G: Talking to Survivors](#)



Cautions and Frequent Problems

1. The Spouse is not always the named recipient of Death Gratuity, SGLI or the PADD. Caution should be taken if asked questions regarding Casualty/Mortuary benefits/entitlements. All inquiries in these matters are best directed to the respective program points of contact.
2. Be aware of family dynamics and ensure communication is with all NOK, as the family desires. Many parents provide feedback that they were cut out of communication if the Airman or Guardian had a spouse. Ensure you do not inadvertently leave out family members, expecting one family member to communicate with the rest.
3. Extending entitlements or making promises to the PADD or NOK that are not authorized or can't be kept:

a. Transportation of Remains: Transportation of remains in CONUS, including Alaska and Hawaii is authorized using a commercial carrier or hearse only. **MILAIR IS NOT AUTHORIZED** (an exception to policy may be requested and requires Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force approval). The Mortuary Officer will brief the family and arrange transportation of remains.

b. Travel to Attend Funeral Service and Unit Memorial Service: The spouse, children (regardless of age), parents of the deceased member and parents of the spouse of the deceased member, brothers and sisters, and PADD are authorized to travel to the funeral service and Unit Memorial Service. Additionally, if there are minor children living with a custodial parent or guardian, the custodial parent or guardian is entitled to travel as an attendant to the minor child. Consult your Mortuary Officer if the family dynamics are beyond the scope of this guidance. The Mortuary Officer will brief the family and arrange these services. Connecting with partner organizations such as the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) may be able to supplement travel expenses for survivors who are not otherwise authorized to travel.



NOTE: Coordination with the Mortuary Officer is imperative to ensure no conflict between the schedule for the funeral service and the unit memorial service, should one be held. All efforts should be made to accommodate the family's wishes to attend both services. Also consider any requirements for passports and/or visas.

c. Escorts: ONLY ONE ESCORT IS AUTHORIZED: The family can request a special escort or an escort will be appointed by the Mortuary Officer. The Mortuary Officer at the shipping installation will brief the family and make all arrangements for the escort.

d. Flag & Hardwood Flag Cases: Authorized recipients are as follows: one to spouse; one to each child; one to the parents, if married; one to each parent, if divorced and the PADD is entitled to a flag/flag case, if the person designated is other than one of the persons previously listed.



NOTE: These flags are not authorized to be used at the unit memorial service.

4. Providing incorrect status to NOK: Questions related to search and recovery, identification and viewability of remains should be directed to the Mortuary Officer.

5. Not directing NOK inquiries to the Mortuary Officer or Casualty Assistance Representative: Refer back to the Casualty Assistance Representative and Mortuary Officer roles and responsibilities to know where to refer the family.

6. Ensuring Airmen and Guardians update their RED and SGLI elections at least annually, when deploying or when arriving to a new duty station will mitigate many challenges we experience with timely execution of casualty notifications and survivor support.



APPENDIX A:

Communicating and Unit Memorials for Suspected Death by Suicide

Communication Tips

- Avoid announcing specific details of the suicide, merely state the death is under investigation. Do not mention the method used. Location is announced as either on-base or off-base. Do not announce specific location, who found the body, whether or not a note was left, or why the member may have killed himself.
- Avoid glorifying/idealizing deceased or conveying the suicide is different from any other death.
- When engaging in public discussions of the suicide:
 - Express sadness at the Air Force's or Space Force's loss and acknowledge the grief of the survivors;
 - Emphasize the unnecessary nature of suicide as alternatives are readily available;
 - Express disappointment that the Airman or Guardian did not recognize that help was available;
 - Ensure the audience knows you and the Air Force or Space Force want personnel to seek assistance when distressed, including those who are presently affected;
 - Encourage Wingmen to be attuned to those who may be grieving or having a difficult time following the suicide, especially those close to the deceased; and
 - Provide brief reminder of warning signs for suicide.
- Connecting with resources for stabilization of the unit such as the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors Pre/Postvention program 24/7 can offer assistance and guidance with safe messaging.
- After death announcement is made to the work center, follow-up your comments in an e-mail provided to the community affected. Restate the themes noted above.
- Unless you discern there is a risk of being perceived as disingenuous, consider increasing senior leadership presence in the work area immediately following announcement of death. Engage informally with personnel and communicate message of support and information. Presence initially should be fairly intensive and then decrease over the next 30 days to a tempo you find appropriate.
- Ensure Department of Defense Suicide Event Report (DoDSER) completion for military personnel and participate, as requested, with any appointed independent reviewer process (suicide review for installation/MAJCOM, or Medical Incident Investigation (MII). Avoid defensiveness.
 - Acknowledge the processes are intended to determine if there are any 'lessons learned' in regards to suicide prevention, not to affix blame.
- Anniversaries of suicide (1 month, 6 month, 1 year, etc.) are periods of increased risk. Promote healthy behaviors and the Wingman concept during these periods.

Unit Memorials

The time period after a suicide death and the efforts to facilitate the healing of individuals, families, and units from the grief and distress of a suicide loss, as well as to mitigate the negative effects of exposure to suicide, is referred to as Postvention. The postvention efforts to provide everyone who is exposed to suicide loss with compassionate, immediate, and long-term support is vital to comprehensive suicide prevention efforts. Postvention includes opportunities for healthy individual and collective grieving, and includes memorial services.

Experts agree that healthy public opportunities for groups of people that have established relationships and interact closely with one another, such as military units, are an important aspect of postvention. Opportunities to grieve together, such as memorial services, are important to foster resilience by helping loss survivors grieve, heal, and move forward in a healthy manner. In the past, well-meaning leaders intending to mitigate negative impacts of a suicide death may have interfered with plans to memorialize an Airman who died by suicide. This "shut-down" approach may produce other negative effects within the unit and for surviving family members. It is important to note that concerns about suicide contagion or "copy-cats" is legitimate, especially in regards to media and public messaging related to suicide. It is important to balance and distinguish between honoring the Airman's life without glorifying or conveying judgment regarding their manner of death. Please contact Public Affairs for the Air Force Suicide Prevention Public Affairs Guideline for safe messaging strategies.

Below are considerations to help leaders facilitate public grieving for the Airman or Guardian they lost to suicide in a safe manner:

1. Plan memorial services in consultation with the family, supervisor, unit leaders, close colleagues, chaplains, mental health providers, other professionals, and public affairs.
2. Seek guidance, support, and "lessons learned" from other leaders who have lost Airmen to suicide. Other leaders may have also experienced the loss of an Airman to suicide and can provide guidance. There is no need to walk alone. Learn from them and lean on them.
3. During the memorial, strive to honor the life and service of the Airman and the accomplishments and contributions of the Airman. Comfort the bereaved and share the ways you, as a leader, will help those who are affected. Share information about the helping resources on your base.
4. Avoid inadvertently sensationalizing the Airman's death by sharing details of the manner of the Airman's death (e.g. the way the Airman killed him/herself, if they left a suicide note, details of the difficulties the Airman was dealing with that may have contributed to their death).
5. Avoid language that assigns fault or guilt. Even though literature suggests that all suicides are preventable, that message during the immediate aftermath of a suicide may communicate fault to family members, supervisors, and friends. Balance sensitivity for the needs of the bereaved with the urgency of suicide prevention efforts/messages.
6. If an Airman's service warrants recommendation for medals/awards, then the applicable award guidance should be followed without respect to the manner of death. Ask the family how they want the medal presented to them. If incorporated into the memorial service, ensure it is clear that the medal is for how the Airman served and does not glorify a death by suicide.

7. Permanent public memorials such as trees, plaques, buildings, or streets with the decedent's names are not recommended as they may inadvertently glorify the manner of death. If unit or family members wish to memorialize their Airman, encourage thoughtful ways they can contribute to suicide prevention efforts, such as a donation to a non-profit or sponsorship of a suicide prevention activity held after an appropriate amount of time after the Airman's death.

The actions of leaders are important during postvention and can greatly aid their unit's healing after a suicide loss. Most importantly, remember to take care of yourself and your own grief, and to role model help-seeking. Your examples of self-care have widespread impact throughout your unit. For additional suicide postvention resources, visit <https://www.resilience.af.mil/postvention-tools/>.



APPENDIX B:

Flyover Request

In accordance with Air Force Instruction 11-209, *Participation in Aerial Events*, flyovers are authorized for former Air Force and Air Force Reserve members who meet at least one of the following criteria and can provide supporting documentation:

- Attained the rank of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force or Lt. General or General regardless of Aeronautical rating
- Awarded the Medal of Honor, Air Force Cross, Army Distinguished Service Cross, or Navy Cross
- Aviators who attained one or more aerial victories
- Former Prisoners of War
- Dignitaries of the Armed Forces and federal government

Flyovers are also authorized for Active Duty and Reserve Air Force aviation rated officers (pilots, navigators, air battle managers, observers, and flight surgeons) and career enlisted aviators (1AXXX enlisted crewmembers).

For services taking place at Arlington National Cemetery, flyovers can only be scheduled between 10:00 AM until 3:00PM due to FAA flight restrictions, and between 11:00AM until 2:00PM between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

If an individual meets the eligibility criteria, requests may be routed through the nearest servicing Air Force Base Mortuary Affairs.

For all other individuals who do not meet the above listed criteria, an Exception to Policy Waiver can be requested by emailing the following items in PDF format to AFMAO.ma@us.af.mil or faxing to our attention at (302) 677-2767 to initiate the process.

*****Please note that a minimum of 5 working days are required in order to process requests and locate a volunteer unit that can participate. ******

- Letter signed by the next of kin requesting flyover and exception to policy to include time, date, and place of service
- DD-214
- Biography of individual including significant contributions to the Air Force to include awards and decorations
- Any supporting documentation deemed notable to establish an exception to policy

If you desire to pursue the waiver to policy process, please expedite the above information to this office so we may process in time for the funeral.

The policy waiver decision is made at senior Air Force leadership level and will be contingent upon locating a volunteer flying unit.

APPENDIX C:

Protocol for Presenting the United States Flag

FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS

In accordance with Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1300.15, *Military Funeral Support*, only the following verbiage will be used when presenting the American flag during a funeral or memorial service:

“On behalf of the President of the United States, the United States Air Force, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one’s honorable and faithful service.”



APPENDIX D:

Call from family prior to Casualty notification

If a spouse, child, or parent calls inquiring about the status of a deceased Airman or Guardian prior to the official notification, and is asking about the member’s status, we cannot withhold that information from them. After verifying the caller’s relationship to the Airman or Guardian, inform the family member of the Airman’s death by stating:

“On behalf of the Chief of Staff, of the Air Force (or Chief of Space Operations, United States Space Force), I regret to inform you of the untimely death of your (son, husband, wife, daughter, etc.), (member’s rank and name).”

Advise the survivor that a Notification Team is enroute to personally notify them and convey condolences. Ensure they intend to remain at the address or secure an address where they will be going. This will ensure the Notification Team is able to reach them without further delay.

Once notified, a natural emotional reaction to this news is for survivors to experience shock, disbelief, denial, anger, and other highly intensified emotions. They may be angry, and it may seem they are focusing their anger on you personally. Remain calm, lower the volume of your voice. At the end of the call, immediately notify the CAR and Mortuary Officer who you have notified.

****Callers relationship verification:** Request the caller’s name, address and relationship to the Airman or Guardian they are inquiring. Secure their phone number and ask if you can call them back. This will provide time for you to verify with your CAR the callers relationship to the Airman or Guardian. If the caller says no, request to put them on hold to verify their relationship. The RED, SOES election, DEERS or SF 86 may be used to verify relationships.



APPENDIX E:

Example Statement of Good Standing

Below is an example memorandum; formatting in the Tongue and Quill should be followed.

MEMORANDUM FOR {Insert Cemetery selected by the PADD (e.g., ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY)}

FROM: ORG/SYMBOL
Organization
Street address
City, ST Zip

SUBJECT: General Court-Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) Statement of Honorable Service in accordance with 32 CFR § 553.10(c) for {Insert RANK & NAME OF DECEASED}

1. As the GCMCA, I am writing to confirm that the following Airman was on active duty and in good standing at the time of his/her death:
- Name:
 - Branch:
 - Entry Date on Active Duty:
 - Rank:
 - SSN:
 - Character of Discharge: Honorable
 - Unit:
2. Point of contact for this action is *Mr. John Doe, at (000) 000-0000 or e-mail:john.doe@branch.mil.*

FIRST M. LAST, USAF
Title

APPENDIX F:

Support Contact Information Resource Sheet

This resource sheet provides the main points of contact who will assist you as you navigate the days ahead. Please note that it's possible not all resources assigned to you are located at the same installation. While you have a main installation listed at the top, the location for each point of contact is included for each individual.

Whether your fallen loved one is an Airman (US Air Force) or Guardian (US Space Force), survivor support may be provided by personnel working at a base operated by either Service, as both Services fall under the auspices of the Department of the Air Force.

Installation Resource Sheet

Casualty Assistance Office

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Unit Commander

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Mortuary Affairs Officer

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Unit First Sergeant

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Air Force Families Forever (AFFF)

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Family Assistance Representative (FAR)

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Summary Courts Officer (SCO)

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Air Force Office of Special Investigation (AFOSI) Family Liaison

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Mental Health and Community Counseling

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Legal Office

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Transportation Management Office (TMO)

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Chaplain Corps

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Civilian Personnel Office (CPO)

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

Military Personnel Flight (MPF)

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Installation:

List of Important Documents

- DD Form 1300 “Report of Casualty” (provided by your casualty assistance office)
- DD Form 2064 “Certificate of Death (Overseas)”
- Civilian death certificates (can be purchased through funeral home; 10 copies recommended)
- Online Survivor Benefit Report (OSBR) (provided by the Casualty Assistance Office)
- Marriage certificate
- Divorce decree
- Birth certificate

Casualty Assistance Representative: The primary goals of the Air Force Casualty Program are: prompt reporting, dignified and humane notification, and efficient, thorough, and compassionate assistance to the those designated or entitled to receive Death Gratuity, Arrears of Pay, Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI), Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP), Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), 365-Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), Veteran Affairs Educational Benefits, Social Security as applicable.

Mortuary Affairs Officer: The Mortuary Affairs Officer will provide assistance with funeral and burial entitlements, memorial service arrangements, military funeral honors, headstone and memorial marker program, search and recovery operations, ensuring proper identification, explaining viewability of remains and Body Not Recovered (BNR) entitlements (for Airmen whose remains are not recovered, e.g. over water loss).

Air Force Families Forever (AFFF): Air Force Families Forever (AFFF) is a long-term survivor program established to provide support to family members of deceased Regular Air Force, Space Force, Air National Guard, and Reservist who died in an Active Duty Status, Inactive Duty for Training (IDT), or Annual Training (AT) status and whose relationship was established prior to the Airman or Guardian’s death. Support is provided through Airman & Family Readiness Centers (A&FRCs) at installations closest to where the survivor resides.

Unit Commander or Designee: Commanding Officer of the home station unit the deceased member was assigned to at the time of death.

Unit First Sergeant: First Sergeant of the unit the deceased member was assigned to at the time of death. First sergeants advise commanders on the readiness, health, morale, welfare, and quality of life of Airmen, Guardians and families to ensure a mission-ready force.

- Immigration documents
- Naturalization papers
- Adoption and/or custody documents
- Social Security number/card for all family members
- Wills and deeds of trust
- Insurance policies (life, home, vehicles, etc.)
Income tax records (past three years)
- Documents referring to bank accounts, loans, securities, etc.
- References to outstanding debt
- Vehicle title and registration

Summary Courts Officer (SCO): A SCO assists the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD) with the transition of the personal property and effects from military control to the person eligible to receive effect, which is subject to distribution under probate. Must be a commissioned officer appointed by the Special Court-Martial Convening Authority.

Family Assistance Representative (FAR): The FAR is a military member, typically from the Airman's unit and recommended by the commander of the deceased and appointed by the installation commander, who assists the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD) or Primary Next of Kin (PNOK). The FAR is not an expert in any entitlements area, but serves a short-term role as an advocate to link the family to available resources and support.

Air Force Office of Special Investigation (AFOSI) Family Liaison: OSI units will assign a member as a family liaison representative, to the designated family members of a deceased active duty member whose death was investigated by OSI. It is designed to promote dialogue between OSI and designated family members, to resolve questions and issues pertaining to the investigation of their deceased loved one. There are times when OSI will be unable to share certain aspects of the investigation, due to legal or investigative restrictions. The Family Liaison serves to assist the family through the investigative process and provide information on how to obtain the investigative report upon the closure of the investigation.

Mental Health or Community Counseling: Provides eligible survivors a connection to therapeutic counseling services offered through partnership with a military service provider (DoD ID card holders), Department of Veteran Affairs (Vet Centers/Clinics), or non-governmental organization. Legal Assistance: Surviving dependents can make an appointment with a Department of Defense legal assistance officer if they are the Primary Next of Kin (PNOK) or the decedent's legally recognized estate representative. Legal assistance services includes assistance for settlement of estates, including taxes.

Transportation Management Office (TMO): Provides surviving dependents with one-on-one consultation and self-counseling through the Defense Personal Property System for the final government movement of household goods.

Chaplain Corps: Provides eligible survivors pastoral care and counseling to those of faith and those of no faith. Chaplains are religious ministry professionals who support spiritual resilience.

Civilian Personnel Office: Provides surviving dependents with employment information to include federal hiring preferences and employment benefits for civilian employees.

Military Personnel Flight: Provides updates to your military ID card for surviving dependents.



APPENDIX G:

Talking to Survivors

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), the national non-profit organization providing free peer based emotional support to all those grieving the death of a military loved one) provides the following guidance on how to talk with survivors. To connect 24/7, call 800.959.TAPS(8277) or TAPS.org.

"Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening Mr./Ms. _____"	Short friendly word that develops instant rapport and acknowledges the mourner
Use the survivor's name	It acknowledges you know who we are and our relationship to our loved one Make eye contact and avoid looking at a watch or electronic device
Allow the mourner time to compose themselves	Give them time to cry, sit in silence Have tissue easily available
Reassure them that their loved one will be honored and respected Listen to how they speak about their loved one	Present tense vs. Past tense
Use the deceased's rank and name	Honors the life lived and service rendered
Offer choices and listen to requests	Gives the survivor a semblance of control in a situation where they have no control Maintain eye contact and use names
If you feel comfortable, physical contact	Hand on the shoulder Hands on their hands
Be comfortable in silence	No need to fill the silence; silence is a hard pause for the survivor to gather their thoughts and process information
Ask if they have questions	If there is something you are worried about that could cause further trauma, speak in a positive manner with what is known, not what is inferred
If the survivors wish to view their loved one	Prepare them with what they are going to see, smell, hear, etc. and allow them time to decide for themselves

From Maj Emily Short, surviving daughter of Maj Philip Ambard:

Don't only reference their loved one in the context of their death. For example, your person may have been a hero in his or her death—but that person was their father, sister, spouse, and a million other relationship connections that matter so much more than the reason they aren't with us anymore. It's okay to say that, but ask if they would be willing to share with you what that person was like in the context of their relationship

What can you say?

"I'm very sorry."

"You have our support."

"This is a great loss to the organization/nation."

"_____ will be greatly missed." (use their loved one's name)

Offer choices and listen to requests.

Begin conversations with those emotionally related to the deceased with an acknowledgement of their sacrifice not just a "statement of facts" or need for information
Honor the dead by focusing on the life and the service.

What shouldn't you say?

I know exactly how you feel

It's God's will

He/She is in a better place

At least they didn't suffer - or At least they're out of their misery

At least you have other children

At least you're young

It could have been worse

Everything happens for a reason

God doesn't give us more than we can handle

Do you, really?

Does God really work like this?

But I want him/her here!

How do you know this?

You cannot compare!

So I have decades to face alone?

Not if the outcome was death!

So, what's the reason?

But I can't handle this!

Words to Avoid

Acceptance

Goodbye

Closure

Loss

Move past this

Get on with life

Time heals all wounds

Get over it

This feels "unacceptable"

They live forever in our hearts

You never "close" them out of your life or forget the life and the love

They are not "lost", they have died

You can't force healing

Life is forever altered

Healing takes time and time is something they no longer have

"it" is not something you "get over", you must find comfort and peace within and then, somehow, create a new future

