

Casualty, Mortuary Affairs, and Military Funeral Honors Programs Content Guide

The following established style guidelines reflect the longstanding practices of developers and editors of content for the Casualty, Mortuary Affairs, and Military Funeral Honors programs. They are consistent with the rules and guidance outlined in the Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

Do

- Keep the wider audience range in mind.
- Remember that “casualty assistance” also includes help for the injured, ill or missing.
- Use the Defense Department logo on all promotional materials. Do not use the DOD or service-branch seals.
- Use “honoree” when referring to deceased service members who are included in the Military In Lasting Tribute online memorial

Do Not

- Make assumptions.
- Tell people how they feel.
- Tell people what they should/need to/must/ought to/can’t/won’t do.
- Tell people what they should always/never do.
- Use euphemisms for death or loss.

Formatting

- “Less is more” — be concise and use direct language.
- Use bulleted formatting for clarity, when appropriate.

Preferred Terms

Preferred	As opposed to
cremated remains	cremains
dead	lost
death (preferred), loss (if no way around it)	passing
deceased service member or decedent	fallen
eligible family member	dependent
died in service to our nation	died in line of duty, ultimate sacrifice

Preferred	As opposed to
Gold Star and Surviving Family Member Representative	gold star and surviving family member representative
gold star mothers, gold star survivors	Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Survivors
in the memorial; on the website	on the memorial; in the website
initial online survivor benefits report, interactive online survivor benefits report	initial Online Survivor Benefits Report, interactive Online Survivor Benefits Report
inter, interred (to place a dead body in the earth or in a tomb), interment	intern, interned (to confine or impound especially during war), internment
memorial (for Military In Lasting Tribute)	Wall
Military Funeral Honors Program	Military Funeral Honors program
military funeral honors services	Military Funeral Honors services
Military In Lasting Tribute	Military in Lasting Tribute
new normal	closure
online memorial	digital memorial
Online Survivor Benefits Report program	online survivor benefits report program
partner, spouse	husband, wife
rifle volley (rifle party provides rifle volley)	gun salute (is only for presidents)
survivor, surviving family member	Using only the term widow or widower — fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, etc., are suffering loss too
Use Department of Defense in the memorial content on the official site (https://tribute.militaryonesource.mil/).	Defense Department
Use Defense Department in all CMA products and content, except for in formal and official correspondence, documents, reports and testimony.	Department of Defense
veterans service organizations	Veterans Service Organizations
You don't have to be alone.	You are not alone.

Definitions

Term	Definition
advance medical directive	This is a written declaration, also known as a living will, that details future medical treatment to provide, withdraw or withhold life-prolonging procedures — including hydration and sustenance — in the event of a terminal condition or permanent vegetative state. It may also appoint a person to make medical decisions.
casualty	Refers to any person who is lost to the organization by having been declared: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dead • Duty status — whereabouts unknown • Excused absence — whereabouts unknown • Missing • Ill • Injured
Casualty Assistance program	The Casualty Assistance program provides a broad range of compassionate help for families of service members who are DUSTWUN, EAWUN, missing, ill, injured or deceased, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedside travel • Burial expenses • Connecting survivors to organizations that provide emotional and spiritual support • Explaining, assisting in, applying for and receiving benefits and entitlements • Financial counseling • Information and referral, including coordinating with outside groups such as benevolent and philanthropic agencies • Injury, mortuary and funeral honors assistance • Legal matters, including tax issues • Liaising with other federal agencies • Obtaining copies of records, reports and investigations • Receipt of personal effects • Relocation assistance, including shipment of household goods • Transportation
casualty assistance officer or representative	The person assigned by the service branch or Defense Department component to provide assistance to the families of ill, injured, DUSTWUN, EAWUN, missing or deceased members.

Term	Definition
casualty category	The classification of a casualty for reporting purposes is based upon the type and status. Casualty categories include killed in action, died of wounds received in action, beleaguered, besieged, captured, detained, interned, missing in action and wounded in action.
casualty status	The classification of a casualty for reporting purposes through seven casualty statuses: deceased, whereabouts unknown, missing, very seriously ill or injured, seriously ill or injured, incapacitating illness or injury and not seriously injured.
date of casualty	For deceased service members, the date of casualty is the date of death. For service members declared DUSTWUN or missing, the date of casualty is the date they were declared DUSTWUN or missing. For service members reported seriously ill or injured, have an incapacitating illness or injury or are not seriously injured, the date of casualty is the date the illness or injury occurred, if known, or the date the person is classified as ill or injured.
death gratuity	A one-time, nontaxable payment to help surviving family members deal with the financial hardships that accompany the loss of a service member.
decedent remains	The intact body, or portions, of a deceased individual, including what results following cremation or natural organic reduction.
DUSTWUN	Duty status — whereabouts unknown, or ‘DUSTWUN,’ is a transitory casualty status, applicable only to military personnel, which a responsible commander uses when he or she suspects the member may be a casualty whose absence is involuntary but does not feel sufficient evidence exists to make a determination of missing or deceased.
hostile casualty	A person who is the victim of terrorist activity or who becomes a casualty “in action.” In action characterizes the casualty as having been the direct result of hostile action — sustained in combat or relating thereto — or sustained going to or returning from a combat mission (provided that the occurrence was directly related to hostile action). Included are persons who are accidentally killed or wounded by friendly fire directed at a hostile force, or what is thought to be hostile force. However, deaths due to the elements, self-inflicted wounds, combat fatigue, and, except in unusual cases, wounds or death inflicted by a friendly force while the individual is in an absent without leave, deserter or dropped-from-rolls status or is voluntarily absent without authority from a place of duty, are not considered as being sustained in action and are not to be interpreted as hostile casualties.

Term	Definition
interactive online survivor benefits report	<p>The interactive online survivor benefits report allows surviving spouses and eligible adult children to review their family’s updated survivor benefits report. The report can be accessed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These reports display not only current and estimated future benefits, but also allow survivors to input “what if” scenarios to family members’ education, disability and marital status. This information is invaluable for a family’s financial planning. Guardians of eligible children can receive a hard copy of their report via mail by contacting the OSBR Family Assistance Support Team, or FAST.</p>
Military Funeral Honors Program	<p>The Military Funeral Honors Program establishes policy, assigns responsibilities and provides procedures for requesting and providing military funeral support. One-time military funeral honors will be provided to eligible beneficiaries upon request. A veteran is eligible to receive military funeral honors if they served in the active military, naval or air service, as defined in Section 101(24) of Title 38, and was discharged or released from that service by means of an honorable or under honorable conditions (general) discharge; died while on active duty; or was a member or former member of the selected reserve described in Section 2301(f)(1) of Title 38, U.S.C.</p> <p>Other eligible beneficiaries include members of the Commissioned Officers Corps of the Public Health Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and specific civilian or contractual groups that have been given active-duty determinations as they may have been named active-duty designees for the military. Such honors reflect the high regard and respect accorded to military service and demonstrate military professionalism to the United States and the world.</p>
Military In Lasting Tribute	<p>The Military In Lasting Tribute memorial honors military heroes who died serving our nation. The memorial is an online destination where survivors can view, remember and share tributes to their loved ones with their networks, extended survivor community and military family. It is the only Defense Department memorial that honors service members who died during peacetime. Within the memorial, family members can submit the names of the service members they would like to see honored. To be eligible, service members must have died while serving honorably on active duty from 1985 to the present.</p>

Term	Definition
missing	<p>This is a casualty status for which the United States code provides statutory guidance concerning missing members of the military services. Excluded are personnel who are in an AWOL, deserter or dropped-from-rolls status. A person declared missing is categorized as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beleaguered — The casualty is a member of an organized element that has been surrounded by a hostile force to prevent the escape of its members. • Besieged — The casualty is a member of an organized element that has been surrounded by a hostile force, compelling it to surrender. • Captured — The casualty has been seized as the result of action of an unfriendly military or paramilitary force in a foreign country. • Detained — The casualty is prevented from proceeding or is restrained in custody for an alleged violation of international law or other reason claimed by the government or group under which the person is being held. • Interned — The casualty is definitely known to have been taken into custody of a nonbelligerent foreign power as the result of and for reasons arising out of any armed conflict in which the U.S. armed forces are engaged. • Missing — The casualty is not present at his or her duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and their location is unknown. • Missing in action — The casualty is a hostile casualty, other than the victim of terrorist activity, who is not present at his or her duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and their location is unknown — commonly referred to as MIA.
Mortuary Affairs	<p>Mortuary Affairs provides the recovery, care, preparation and disposition of remains and the personal effects of deceased service members. Eligible family members of the deceased will also be provided with government-funded travel to attend the burial services for the service member.</p>
nonhostile casualty	<p>This refers to a person who becomes a casualty due to circumstances not directly attributable to hostile action or terrorist activity. Casualties due to the elements, self-inflicted wounds and combat fatigue are nonhostile casualties.</p>
NSI	<p>Not seriously ill or injured is the casualty status of a person whose illness or injury requires medical attention, may or may not require hospitalization and medical authority classifies as less severe than seriously ill or injured.</p>

Term	Definition
PADD	<p>Person authorized to direct disposition: A person, usually the primary next of kin, who is authorized to direct the disposition of human remains. Absent the identification of this person by the service member, the PADD is recognized in the following order:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spouse 2. Adult children who have reached the age of majority in order of seniority, to include natural, adopted, step and children of unmarried parents 3. Parents, in order of seniority 4. Persons granted legal custody of the individual by a court decree of statutory provision 5. Brothers or sisters, in order of seniority, including half-blood and those acquired through adoption 6. Grandparents, in order of seniority 7. Other adult blood relatives, in order of relationship to the individual, according to civil laws determined by age 8. Remarried surviving spouse 9. Persons standing in loco parentis 10. Legal representative of the estate 11. The secretary of the military department may be deemed to act on behalf of the individual if no other persons are available
PERE	<p>This is the person eligible to receive the personal effects of a deceased military member or civilian employee. The government does not assign ownership of personal property and is only responsible for the transfer of effects to the PERE. Any dispute of ownership is a civil court matter that must be settled by interested parties in accordance with state laws.</p>

Term	Definition
PNOK	<p>The primary next of kin is the person most closely related to the casualty for notification and assistance purposes. This is the spouse for married persons and the parents for unmarried service members or individuals. The precedence of next of kin with equal relationships to the casualty is governed by seniority (age). Equal relationship situations include divorced parents, children and siblings. Minor children’s rights are exercised by their parents or legal guardian. The adult next of kin is usually the first person highest in the line of succession who has reached the age of 18. Even if a minor, the spouse is always considered the primary next of kin.</p> <p>The following order of precedence is used to identify the primary next of kin:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spouse 2. Adult children who have reached the age of majority in order of seniority, to include natural, adopted, step and children of unmarried parents 3. Parents, in order of seniority 4. Persons granted legal custody of the individual by a court decree of statutory provision 5. Brothers or sisters, in order of seniority, including half-blood and those acquired through adoption 6. Grandparents, in order of seniority 7. Other adult blood relatives, in order of relationship to the individual according to civil laws determined by age 8. Remarried surviving spouse 9. Persons standing in loco parentis 10. Legal representative of the estate 11. The secretary of the military department may be deemed to act on behalf of the individual if no other persons are available
POW	<p>Prisoner of war is not a casualty status for reporting purposes. For reporting purposes, the casualty status and category would be missing-captured. The term POW is the international legal status of military and certain other personnel captured during an armed conflict between two countries. This status entitles those captured to humanitarian treatment under the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of Prisoners of War.</p>
'RED' or DD Form 93	<p>“Record of Emergency Data,” or DD Form 93, is a form used to designate beneficiaries for certain benefits and designate the PADD in the event of the service member’s death. It is a guide for the disposition of that service member’s pay and allowances if captured, missing or interred. It also shows names and addresses of the person(s) the service member or civilian employee desires to be notified in case of emergency or death.</p>

Term	Definition
SGLI	Servicemembers Group Life Insurance is a program that provides low-cost term life insurance coverage to eligible service members.
SI	Seriously injured or ill is the casualty status of a person whose injury(s) or illness requires medical attention, and competent medical authority declares that death is possible but not likely to occur within 72 hours.
Survivor Benefit Plan	<p>The Survivor Benefit Plan is an annuity and allows a military retiree to ensure, after death, a continuous lifetime annuity for their dependents. The annuity is based on a percentage of retired pay paid to an eligible beneficiary. It pays their eligible survivors an inflation-adjusted monthly income. SBP will pay a surviving spouse a monthly payment (annuity) to help make up for the loss of their military retiree’s retirement income.</p> <p>A military retiree pays premiums for SBP coverage upon retiring. They pay premiums from gross retired pay, so the premiums don’t count as income. This means less tax and less out-of-pocket costs for SBP. The government partially funds the premiums and absorbs the costs of operating the program, so the average premiums are well below the cost for a conventional insurance policy.</p> <p>SBP covers, at no cost, service members who die after Sept. 10, 2001, while serving on active duty if they have an eligible beneficiary. This is a gratuitous benefit — it does not cost the active-duty member anything; however, the military must classify the member's death as “in line-of-duty” for an annuity to be payable if the member is not yet retirement eligible (has not accrued 20 years of service) on the date of death.</p>
Survivors’ and Dependents’ Education Assistance Program	A federally funded Department of Veterans Affairs program that provides education and training benefits to family members of service members who have been permanently and totally disabled as a result of a service-connected condition or who have died while on active duty.
Survivors Forum	This is a meeting co-chaired by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Defense Department to exchange updates on survivor benefits to keep military service organizations, such as Gold Star Wives, Army Survivor Outreach Services, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, etc., informed. There is a limited time for the organizations to ask questions of the VA and the Defense Department. The forum is held every four months (typically, two weeks before Casualty Advisory Board and Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Board meetings).
VSI	Very seriously ill or injured is the casualty status of a person whose injury(s) or illness is such that competent medical authority declares it more likely than not that death will occur within 72 hours.