

Casualty Assistance Data Dictionary

The following established style guidelines reflect the longstanding practices of developers and editors of content for the Casualty Assistance program area. They are consistent with rules and guidance outlined in The Associated Press Stylebook and reflective of both the Casualty Assistance program and Office of Military Community and Family Policy style and usage preferences.

Do:

- Keep the wide audience range in mind.
- Remember "casualty assistance" is broader than just when death occurs.

Do not:

- Make assumptions
- Tell people how they feel
- Tell people what they should, need to, must, ought, can't or won't do
- Use euphemisms for death or loss

Preferred terms

Preferred	As opposed to
death, loss	passing
widow, widower	dependent
survivor, victim	using only the term widow or widower — fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, etc., are suffering loss too
new normal	closure
deceased service member	fallen

Definitions:

- **Authorized representative** — This casualty assistance term refers to the individual chosen by the next of kin to represent them in matters dealing with the loss of the service member in terms of beneficiary eligibility.
- **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 dead, duty status — whereabouts unknown, excused absence — whereabouts unknown, missing, ill or injured.
- **Casualty Assistance program** — This program is a commitment to provide authorized and necessary assistance to eligible family members of deceased, duty status — whereabouts unknown, or DUSTWUN, excused absence — whereabouts unknown, or EAWUN, missing, ill or injured personnel. Assistance may include, but is not limited to, transportation assistance, applying for and receiving benefits and entitlements, obtaining copies of records, reports and investigations, legal assistance, receipt of personal effects, mortuary and funeral honors assistance, relocation assistance (including the shipment of household goods), liaison with other federal agencies, information and referral (including emotional and spiritual support) and other assistance as requested.
- **Casualty assistance officer or representative** — This is the title of the person assigned by the service or Department of Defense component concerned to provide assistance to the families of ill, injured, DUSTWUN, EAWUN, missing or deceased members.
- **Casualty category** — The classification of a casualty for reporting purposes 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 declared DUSTWUN or missing. For service members reported VSI, SI, III or NSI, the date of casualty is the date the illness or injury occurred, if known, or the date the person is so classified as ill or injured.
- **Death gratuity** — A one-time, non-taxable payment to help surviving family members deal with the financial hardships that accompany the loss of a service member.
- **DUSTWUN** — Duty status — whereabouts unknown, or ‘DUSTWUN,’ is a transitory casualty status, applicable only to military personnel, that is used when the responsible commander suspects the member may be a casualty whose absence is involuntary, but does not feel sufficient evidence currently exists to make a determination of missing or deceased.
- **VSI** — Very seriously ill or injured is the casualty status of a person whose illness or injury is such that medical authority declares it more likely than not that death will occur within 72 hours.
- **SI** — Seriously injured or ill is the casualty status of a person whose illness or injury requires medical attention. Medical authority declares that death is possible, but not likely within 72 hours, and the severity is such that it is permanent and life-altering.

- **NSI** — 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 SI.
- **Hostile casualty** — This refers to a person who is the victim of a 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 killed or wounded mistakenly or accidentally 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 sustained in action and not to be interpreted as hostile casualties.
- **Non-hostile casualty** — 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 non-hostile casualties.
- **Survivor Benefit Plan** — This insurance plan pays a surviving spouse or child a monthly payment (annuity) to help make up for the loss of a service member’s retired pay, even if the service member dies while on active duty.
- **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 low-key meeting co-chaired by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense casualty office 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 Department of Defense. The forum is held every four months (typically, two weeks before Casualty Advisory Board and Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Board meetings).
- **Missing** — 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:
 - Beleaguered — The casualty is a member of an organized element that has been surrounded by a hostile force to prevent 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 alleged violation of international law or other reason claimed by the government or group under which the person is being held.
- Interred — 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 location is unknown.
- Missing in action — The casualty is a hostile casualty, other than the victim of a terrorist activity, who is not present at his or her duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and location is unknown — commonly referred to as MIA.
- **PADD** — Person authorized to direct disposition — A person, usually the primary next of kin, who is authorized to direct disposition of human remains. Absent the identification of this person by the service member, the PADD is recognized in the following order:
 1. Spouse
 2. Natural, adopted, step and illegitimate children
 3. Parents
 4. Persons standing in loco parentis
 5. Persons granted legal custody of the individual by a court decree of statutory provision
 6. Brothers or sisters, including half-blood and those acquired through adoption
 7. Grandparents
 8. Other relatives in order of relationship to the individual according to civil laws
 9. The secretary of the military department may be deemed to act on behalf of the individual if no other persons are available
 10. Secondary next of kin is any other next of kin, other than the primary next of kin
- **PERE** — This is the person eligible to receive the personal effects of a deceased military member or civilian employee.
- **PNOK** — The primary next of kin is the person most closely related to the casualty for notification and assistance purposes. This is normally 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. The following order of precedence is used to identify the primary next of kin:
 1. Spouse
 2. Natural, adopted, step and illegitimate children
 3. Parents
 4. Persons standing in loco parentis
 5. Persons granted legal custody of the individual by a court decree of statutory provision
 6. Brothers or sisters, including half-blood and those acquired through adoption

7. Grandparents
 8. Other relatives in order of relationship to the individual according to civil laws
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- **POW** — 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 and that status entitles those captured to humanitarian treatment under the Third Geneva Convention.
 - **'RED' or DD Form 93** — Record of emergency data or DD Form 93 is a form used to designate beneficiaries for certain benefits and designated the PADD in the event of the service member's death. It is a guide for the disposition of that member's pay and allowances if captured, missing or interred. It also shows names and addresses of the person(s) the service member desires to be notified in case of emergency or death.
 - **SGLI** — Servicemembers Group Life Insurance is a program that provides low-cost term life insurance coverage to eligible service members.