

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



The following established style guidelines reflect the long-standing 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.

## Content Tips

- 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
- Be concise and use direct language — “Less is more.”
- Use bulleted formatting for clarity, when appropriate.
- Use Defense Department (instead of Department of Defense) in all CMA products and content, except in formal and official correspondence, documents, reports and testimony. (Note: Use Department of Defense in the memorial content on the official site (<https://tribute.militaryonesource.mil/>.)
- Use “You don’t have to be alone” instead of “You are not alone.”
- Use descriptive words such as resilience and pillars of strength in messages for survivor family member remembrances. They carry on the legacy of their service member and never forget their loved one as they move toward their new normal.

## Things to Avoid

- Avoid making assumptions.
- Avoid telling people how they feel.
- Avoid telling people what they should/need to/must/ought to/can’t do.
- Avoid using euphemisms for death (e.g. loss, families of the fallen, etc.). Be direct.
- Avoid saying committed suicide. Use death by suicide.
- Avoid saying died in line of duty.

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- Avoid saying gold star survivors.
- Avoid the term gratuitous.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
AFME	Armed Forces Medical Examiner
AFMES	Armed Forces Medical Examiner System
AP3	Authorized Provider Partnership Program
AWOL	absent without leave
DFAS	Defense Finance and Accounting Service
DUSTWUN	duty status — whereabouts unknown
EAWUN	excused absence — whereabouts unknown
FAST	OSBR Family Assistance Support Team
FSGLI	Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance
KIA	killed in action
MIA	missing in action
NOK	next of kin
NSI	not seriously ill or injured
OSBR	online survivor benefits report
PADD	person authorized to direct disposition
PERE	person eligible to receive effects
PNOK	primary next of kin
POW	prisoner of war
RED	Record of Emergency Data

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Abbreviation or acronym	Full title
SBP	Survivor Benefit Plan
SGLI	Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance
SI	seriously ill or injured
TSGLI	Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Affairs
VSI	very seriously ill or injured
VSO	veterans service organizations

## Preferred Terms

### Acceptable

cremated remains (instead of cremains)

dead (instead of lost)

death (preferred) (instead of passing or loss)

deceased service member or decedent (instead of fallen)

died in service to our nation (instead of died in line of duty, ultimate sacrifice)

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## Acceptable

eligible family member (instead of dependent)

Gold Star and Surviving Family Member Liaison (instead of gold star and surviving family member liaison)

Gold Star Mother's and Family's Day (instead of Gold Star Mothers and Families Day)

gold star mothers (instead of Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Survivors)

Gold Star Spouses Day (instead of Gold Star Spouse's Day)

initial online survivor benefits report, interactive online survivor benefits report (instead of initial Online Survivor Benefits Report, interactive Online Survivor Benefits Report)

in the memorial; on the website (instead of on the memorial; in the website)

inter, interred (means to place a dead body in the earth or in a tomb) or interment (instead of intern, interned, internment)

memorial (for Military In Lasting Tribute) (instead of wall)

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## Acceptable

Military Funeral Honors Program (instead of Military Funeral Honors program)

military funeral honors services (instead of Military Funeral Honors services)

Military In Lasting Tribute (instead of Military in Lasting Tribute)

Navigating (instead of coping, when coping can be avoided)

new normal (instead of closure, moved on)

online memorial (instead of digital memorial)

Online Survivor Benefits Reports program (instead of online survivor benefits reports program)

partner, spouse (instead of husband, wife)

rifle volley (rifle party provides rifle volley) (instead of gun salute, which is only for specific individuals who held specific positions, etc.)

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## Acceptable

survivor, surviving family member (instead of using only the term widow or widower — fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, etc. are suffering loss, too)

veterans service organizations (instead of Veterans Service Organizations)

warm handoff (instead of transfer of care, handoff, turn it over to, move it on, etc.)

## Definitions

Term	Definition
advance medical directive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li></ul>
AFMES	<p>The Armed Forces Medical Examiner System provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The DOD and other federal agencies with comprehensive forensic investigative services, to include forensic pathology, DNA Forensics, forensic toxicology and medical mortality surveillance</li><li>• Answers to frequently asked questions about medicolegal examinations or scientific and legal medical investigations</li><li>• American Board of Pathology-certified physicians under the supervision of a board-certified forensic pathologist</li></ul>

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Term	Definition
	Certificates of deaths overseas where the AFMES has jurisdiction
A Survivor's Guide to Benefits: Taking Care of Our Families	<p>This downloadable guide is intended to inform survivors about benefits they may be eligible to receive from government agencies.</p> <p>The casualty assistance officer should provide the Days Ahead Binder, which will include this survivor's guide, to the PNOK.</p>
Beneficiary Financial Counseling service	<p>Financial counseling services are offered to beneficiaries of SGLI, FSGLI and TSGLI. This free service is offered by FinancialPoint® on behalf of the VA. FinancialPoint® provides beneficiaries with valuable personalized financial information and expert consultation to ensure they have the tools necessary to manage their finances effectively.</p> <p>BFCS is available for two years from the date the claim is paid or 40 hours of financial counseling, whichever comes first. Consultants will not sell anything but are merely there to provide financial advice.</p>
bereavement counseling	<p>Bereavement counseling (sometimes called "grief counseling") provides assistance and support for people going through emotional and psychological stress after the death of a loved one.</p> <p>The VA offers bereavement counseling to family members of armed forces personnel who died in service to our nation. Also eligible are family members of reservists and National Guardsmen who die while on duty, as well as family members of a veteran who was receiving Vet Center services at the time of the veteran's death.</p>

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Term	Definition
	<p>Military OneSource provides confidential counseling services for a wide range of issues, including navigating the death of a loved one.</p> <p>Note: Casualty assistance officers are not trained in bereavement counseling.</p>
casualty	<p>Refers to any person who is lost to the organization by having been determined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dead</li> <li>• Duty status — whereabouts unknown</li> <li>• Excused absence — whereabouts unknown</li> <li>• Missing</li> <li>• Ill</li> </ul> <p>Injured</p>
casualty assistance officer or representative; casualty assistance calls officer	<p>The person assigned by the service branch or Defense Department component to help the families of DUSTWUN, EAWUN, missing or deceased members. In such cases, a casualty assistance officer assists the primary next of kin. Assistance officers will also be assigned to the parents of married service members, who are considered the secondary next of kin.</p> <p>The official title of the person providing assistance depends on the service branch: Army (casualty assistance officer, or CAO); Marines: casualty assistance calls officer, or CACO); Navy (CACO); Air Force (casualty assistance representative, or CAR); Coast Guard (CACO).</p>
Casualty Assistance program	<p>The Casualty Assistance program provides a broad range of compassionate help for families of service members who</p>



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Term	Definition
	<p>are DUSTWUN, EAWUN, missing, ill, injured or deceased. Assistance may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bedside travel</li> <li>• Burial expenses and related travel</li> <li>• Connecting survivors to organizations that provide emotional and spiritual support</li> <li>• Explaining, assisting in, applying for and receiving benefits and entitlements</li> <li>• Financial counseling</li> <li>• Information and referral, including coordinating with outside groups such as benevolent and philanthropic agencies</li> <li>• Mortuary and funeral honors assistance</li> <li>• Legal assistance, including tax issues</li> <li>• Liaising with other federal agencies</li> <li>• Obtaining copies of records, reports and investigations</li> <li>• Receipt of personal effects</li> </ul> <p>Relocation assistance, including shipment of household goods</p>
casualty category	A term used to specifically classify a casualty for reporting purposes based upon the casualty type and the casualty status.
casualty status	A term used to classify a casualty for reporting purposes. There are six casualty statuses: (1) deceased; (2) duty status – whereabouts unknown (DUSTWUN) for military, or excused absence – whereabouts unknown (EAWUN) for civilians; (3) missing; (4) very seriously ill or injured (VSI); (5) seriously ill or injured (SI); and (6) not seriously ill or injured (NSI).

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Term	Definition
confidential counseling	<p>Confidential individual and family counseling is short-term and solution-focused counseling. It's provided to eligible individuals, couples, families and groups to help them cope with the stresses of daily living and adapt to the military lifestyle through personal growth, positive development and improved individual and family functioning.</p> <p>Confidential counseling includes helping those who are in the military community cope with stress, anger management, grief and loss, the deployment cycle, parent-child relationships, couples communication, marital issues and relocations.</p> <p>Who is eligible for confidential counseling?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active-duty service members and their immediate family members.</li> <li>• National Guard and reserve service members (regardless of activation status) and their immediate family members who are listed in DEERS.</li> <li>• Designated Department of Defense expeditionary civilians and their immediate family members.</li> <li>• Service members and their immediate family members who are listed in DEERS for 365 days post separation.</li> <li>• Surviving spouses who have not remarried and surviving children who are listed in DEERS.</li> </ul> <p>Learn more about <a href="#">eligibility for Military OneSource</a>.</p>
date of casualty incident	<p>The date the service member enters a casualty status. For members determined DUSTWUN or missing, the date of casualty is the date determined DUSTWUN or missing. For members determined missing who were initially</p>

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Term	Definition
	determined DUSTWUN, the date of casualty is the date determined DUSTWUN unless there is evidence to indicate a more current date. For persons reported VSI, SI 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 by competent medical authority.
date of death	The date a person died based upon actual knowledge of when the death occurred, receipt of conclusive evidence, or a presumptive finding of death.
death gratuity	A one-time, nontaxable payment of \$100,000 provided by the DOD to assist surviving family members deal with the financial hardships that often accompany the death of a service member, before the survivor benefits are provided. A service member may designate any person or persons to receive up to 100% of the death gratuity (or in 10% increments to up to 10 people). This is normally paid within 72 hours of receipt of DD Form 397, "Claim Certification and Voucher for Death Gratuity Payment."
decedent remains	The intact body, or portions, of a deceased individual, including what results following cremation or natural organic reduction.
DFAS	The Defense Finance and Accounting Service oversees payments to Defense Department service members, employees, surviving family members, vendors and contractors. DFAS also provides Defense Department decision makers with business intelligence, finance and accounting information.
DUSTWUN	Duty status — whereabouts unknown, or DUSTWUN, is a transitory casualty status, applicable only to military personnel, which a responsible commander uses when

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Term	Definition
	they suspect 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.
EAWUN	Excused absence — whereabouts unknown, or EAWUN, is an administrative status, applicable only to civilian personnel, that is used when the responsible commander suspects the employee may be a casualty, whose absence is involuntary, but does not feel sufficient evidence currently exists to make a determination of missing or deceased.
estate	The total property and assets owned by an individual, either at present or after their death. It includes real and personal property, financial assets and belongings. The estate can be distributed through a trust or will, or according to state laws if there is no will.
FSGLI	Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance is a rider to SGLI that provides life insurance coverage for a service member's spouse and dependent children while the member is insured under the SGLI program.
Gold Star and Surviving Family Member Liaison	If a survivor is not satisfied with the casualty assistance provided, they may contact the DOD's Gold Star and Surviving Family Member Liaison. Liaisons are available to provide support and address issues or concerns from spouses and other dependents of deceased service members regarding casualty assistance or receipt of military survivor benefits authorized by law.
Gold Star Lapel Button	The Gold Star Lapel Button consists of a gold star, one-quarter inch in diameter, on a purple disc three-quarters of an inch in diameter. The star is surrounded by gold laurel leaves in a wreath five-eighths of an inch in diameter. The

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Term	Definition
	<p>opposite side bears the inscription, "United States of America, Act of Congress, 1 August 1966."</p> <p>This pin is provided to the eligible next of kin of service members with a defined close familial relationship whose deceased member of the armed services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Died during World War I, World War II or during any subsequent period of armed hostilities in which the United States was engaged before July 1, 1958;</li> <li>2. Died after June 30, 1958:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. While engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;</li> <li>b. While engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or</li> <li>c. While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict in which the United States is not a belligerent party against an opposing armed force; or</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Died after March 28, 1973, as a result of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An international terrorist attack against the United States or a foreign nation friendly to the United States, recognized as such an attack by the Secretary of Defense; or</li> <li>b. Military operations while serving outside the United States (including the commonwealths, territories and possessions of the United States) as part of a peacekeeping force</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>Note: Eligibility is prescribed by law. This is separate from any broad definition of a gold star group or individual.</p>

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government-furnished gravesite	The VA's burial benefits for eligible veterans include a gravesite at any VA national cemetery, based on available space.
government-furnished headstones and markers	The VA will furnish a free government headstone or marker for the grave of any eligible deceased veteran in any cemetery around the world. Headstones and markers are also available for eligible spouses and dependents of veterans interred in a national, DOD or state veteran cemetery.
hostile casualty	<p>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 a hostile force.</p> <p>However, not to be considered as sustained in action and not to be interpreted as hostile casualties are injuries or death 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 AWOL, deserter, or dropped-from-rolls status or is voluntarily absent without authority from a place of duty.</p>
interactive online survivor benefits report	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 generally be accessed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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	<p>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>
<p>Military Funeral Honors Directory</p>	<p>Funeral planners or family members of eligible deceased veterans may request funeral honors by contacting a representative at the number listed in the Military Funeral Honors Directory, which is broken down by state and county and the decedent's military service.</p>
<p>Military Funeral Honors Program</p>	<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 of the United States Code, 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</p>

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Term	Definition
	<p>the high regard and respect accorded to military service and demonstrate military professionalism to the United States and the world.</p>
<p>Military In Lasting Tribute</p>	<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.</p> <p>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>
<p>missing</p>	<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Besieged — The casualty is a member of an organized element that has been surrounded by a hostile force, compelling it to surrender.</li> <li>• Captured — The casualty has been seized as the result of action of an unfriendly military or paramilitary force in a foreign country.</li> <li>• Detained — The casualty is prevented from proceeding or is restrained in custody for an alleged violation of international law or other reason claimed</li> </ul>



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	<p>by the government or group under which the person is being held.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Missing — The casualty is not present at their duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and their location is unknown.</li> </ul> <p>Missing in action — The casualty is a hostile casualty, other than the victim of terrorist activity, who is not present at their duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and their location is unknown — commonly referred to as MIA.</p>
Mortuary Affairs	Mortuary Affairs provides for the search, recovery, presumptive identification, preparation and disposition of human remains of persons for whom the services are responsible by status or executive order.
Next of Kin Deceased Personnel Lapel Button	<p>The Next of Kin Deceased Personnel Lapel Button is provided to the families of service members who died while on active duty or while serving in a drill status as a member of the National Guard or reserves.</p> <p>The pin is gold in color, with a star within a circle of sprigs of oak. The star commemorates honorable service, and the sprigs of oak refer to the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force.</p>
nonhostile 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-

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	inflicted wounds and combat fatigue are nonhostile casualties.
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> <p>Note: Typically only reported for hostile casualties</p>
OSBR	<p>The online survivor benefits reports assist survivors in determining the financial benefits they should be receiving, as well as project future benefits. There are two types of personalized OSBRs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The initial report provided by the casualty assistance officer and available online for six months</li> </ul> <p>The interactive OSBR (see definition)</p>
PADD	<p>Person authorized to direct disposition: This is 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"> <li>1. Spouse</li> <li>2. Adult children who have reached the age of majority in order of seniority (age), to include natural, adopted, step and children of unmarried parents</li> <li>3. Parents, in order of seniority</li> <li>4. Persons granted legal custody of the individual by a court decree of statutory provision</li> <li>5. Brothers or sisters, in order of seniority, including half-blood and those acquired through adoption</li> </ol>

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Term	Definition
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Grandparents, in order of seniority</li> <li>7. Other adult blood relatives, in order of relationship to the individual, according to civil laws determined by age</li> <li>8. Remarried surviving spouses</li> <li>9. Persons standing in loco parentis</li> <li>10. Legal representative of the estate</li> <li>11. Secretary of the military department may be deemed to act on behalf of the individual if no other persons are available</li> </ol> <p>Note: The service member designates the PADD on their DD Form 93. The PADD doesn't have to be a family member.</p>
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>
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</p>

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	<p>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"> <li>1. Spouse</li> <li>2. Adult children who have reached the age of majority in order of seniority, to include natural, adopted, step and children of unmarried parents</li> <li>3. Parents, in order of seniority</li> <li>4. Persons granted legal custody of the individual by a court decree of statutory provision</li> <li>5. Brothers or sisters, in order of seniority, including half-blood and those acquired through adoption</li> <li>6. Grandparents, in order of seniority</li> <li>7. Other adult blood relatives, in order of relationship to the individual according to civil laws determined by age</li> <li>8. Remarried surviving spouses</li> <li>9. Persons standing in loco parentis</li> <li>10. Legal representative of the estate</li> </ol> <p>Secretary of the military department may be deemed to act on behalf of the individual if no other persons are available</p>
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.</p> <p>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</p>

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	captured to humanitarian treatment under the Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.
'RED' or DD Form 93	“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 a 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.
Sesame Street for Military Families: Grief	<p>This online resource features Elmo, along with other Sesame Street Muppets, and the courageous stories of families who have experienced the death of a parent. Visit the following for more information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sesame Street for Military Families: Grief webpage <a href="https://sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org/topic/grief/">https://sesamestreetformilitaryfamilies.org/topic/grief/</a></li> </ul> <p>For Families: When Families Grieve video: <a href="https://youtu.be/XI4-8ZQ1PRE">https://youtu.be/XI4-8ZQ1PRE</a></p>
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 injuries 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	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

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	<p>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 retirement. 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 cost 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 died 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> <p>Note: Do not use the term gratuitous when writing content for CMA.</p>
Survivors' and Dependents' Educational 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

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	<p>survivor benefits to keep military service organizations, such as Gold Star Wives, Army Survivor Outreach Services, The 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).</p>
Survivor Symposium	<p>The virtual Defense Department Survivor Symposium educates surviving family members of service members who died while on active duty about their survivor benefits, entitlements and available resources — as well as addressing any questions or concerns they may have.</p>
The Days Ahead: Essential Papers for Families of Fallen Service Members	<p>This binder provides a place for survivors to keep important papers related to the death of their service member. It also includes information on available assistance, as well as a list of support organizations.</p>
TSGLI	<p>Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection is a rider added to SGLI that provides financial support to service members who have incurred certain physical losses due to traumatic injuries.</p>
Virtual Hope Box	<p>This app includes personalized tools to help a person cope, relax, avoid distractions and connect to others. There's plenty here to help users learn how to handle stress and anxiety during self-care breaks.</p>
VSI	<p>Very seriously ill or injured is the casualty status of a person whose injuries or illness is such that competent medical authority declares it more likely than not that death will occur within 72 hours.</p>

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Term	Definition
warm handoff	<p>The term warm handoff is used to describe referrals that ensure a customer is connected to someone who can provide what they need.</p> <p>For example: The casualty assistance officer will provide a warm handoff to the survivor's long-term case manager.</p>

## Official Resources

### Defense Department policy

- [DOD Directive 1300.22, "Mortuary Affairs Policy," Oct. 30, 2015, incorporating Change 2, Sept. 2, 2021](#)
- [DOD Directive 1332.27, "Survivor Annuity Programs for the Uniformed Services," June 26, 2003, certified as current April 23, 2007](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1005.06, "Display of the National Flag at Half-staff," July 17, 2015](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1300.15, "Military Funeral Support," Dec. 27, 2017, incorporating Change 1, April 9, 2021](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1300.18, "Department of Defense Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies and Procedures," Jan. 8, 2008, incorporating Change 2, March 29, 2023](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1300.29, "Mortuary Affairs Program," June 28, 2021](#)
- [DOD Directive 1300.30, "Department of Defense Support of State, Official, Special Military, and First Lady Funerals," Aug. 24, 2021, incorporating Change 1, Feb. 16, 2023](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1300.31, "Department of Defense Cemeteries," Aug. 3, 2022](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1332.42, "Survivor Benefit Plan," Dec. 30, 2020](#)
- [DOD Instruction 1344.08, "Interment Allowance for Deceased Military Personnel," March 11, 2009, incorporating Change 2, March 25, 2020](#)



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- [DOD Instruction 1348.36, "Gold Star Lapel Button, Service Flag, and Service Lapel Button," Dec. 21, 2016, incorporating Change 1, Sept. 25, 2020](#)
- [DOD Instruction 2310.05, "Accounting for Missing Persons – Boards of Inquiry," Jan. 31, 2000, incorporating Change 1, March 14, 2008](#)
- [DOD Instruction 5154.30, "Armed Forces Medical Examiner System \(AFMES\) Operations," Dec. 29, 2015, incorporating Change 1, Dec. 21, 2017](#)

## Legislation or regulations

- [Public Law 110-207, "Purple Heart Family Equity Act of 2007," April 30, 2008](#)
- [Title 10 United States Code §985, "Persons convicted of capital crimes; certain other persons: denial of specified burial-related benefits," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 10 USC §1126, "Gold star lapel button: eligibility and distribution," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Section 633 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 \(Public Law 113-66\), "Improved assistance for Gold Star spouses and other dependents," Dec. 23, 2013](#)
- [Section 651 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 \(Public Law 113-66\), "Authority to provide certain expenses for care and disposition of human remains that were retained by the Department of Defense for forensic pathology investigation," Dec. 23, 2013](#)
- [Title 10 USC §1032, "Disability and death compensation: dependents of members held as captives," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 10 USC §1036, "Escorts for dependents of members: transportation and travel allowances," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 10 USC §1061, "Survivors of certain reserve and Guard members," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 10 USC Chapter 73, Subchapter II, "Survivor Benefit Plan," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 10 USC Chapter 75, Subchapter II, "Death Benefits," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 26 USC §692, "Income taxes of members of armed forces, astronauts and victims of certain terrorist attacks on death," Jan. 3, 2012](#)

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- [Title 37 USC §411f \[renumbered §481f\], "Travel and transportation allowances: transportation for survivors of deceased member to attend member's burial ceremonies," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 38 USC Chapter 11, "Compensation for Service-Connected Disability or Death," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 38 USC Chapter 13, "Dependency and Indemnity Compensation for Service-Connected Deaths," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 38 USC Chapter 15, "Pension for Non-Service-Connected Disability or Death or for Service," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 38 USC Chapter 19, Subchapter III, "Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 38 USC Chapter 23, "Burial Benefits," Jan. 3, 2012](#)
- [Title 38 USC Chapter 35, "Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance," Jan. 3, 2012](#)

## Military OneSource websites

- Article on [Defense Department Survivor Symposium Series](#)
- Article on [Stepsiblings Now Included in Gold Star Lapel Button Program](#)
- Article on [Understanding the Role of the Casualty Assistance Officer](#)
- Benefit page on [Beneficiary Financial Counseling](#)
- Benefit page on [Casualty Assistance Program](#)
- Benefit page on [Long-Term Assistance](#)
- Benefit page on [Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance](#)
- Benefit page on [Defense Finance and Accounting Service](#)
- Benefit page on [Funeral and Burial Benefits for Service Members](#)
- Benefit page on [Military OneSource Counseling](#)
- Benefit page on [Online Survivor Benefits Report](#)
- Benefit page on [Veterans Assistance](#)

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



- Benefit page on [Veterans Affairs Bereavement Counseling](#)
- Booklet on [A Survivor's Guide to Benefits: Taking Care of Our Families](#)
- DVD on [Sesame Street's When Families Grieve](#)
- Fact sheet on [Death Gratuity](#)
- MilLife Guide on [Managing Stress](#)
- MilLife Guide on [Support for Survivors](#)
- Resource page on [Armed Forces Medical Examiner System](#)
- Resource page on [Military Funeral Honors Directory](#)