

A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE TO BENEFITS

TAKING CARE OF OUR FAMILIES

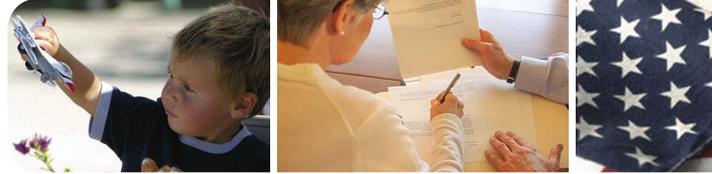


DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

CURRENT AS OF MAY 2016



Place local contact information here



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I. Introduction

This guide is intended to aid you as you work through the difficulty and pain of losing a loved one who was serving in the military.

The Department of Defense is serious about its obligation to our service members and their families. The days ahead will be difficult. While we cannot lessen your loss, we are committed to doing everything possible to help and guide you as you deal with the details and decisions that surround the death of an active-duty service member. Every service member's family may be eligible for certain benefits, privileges and entitlements. This guide provides a brief overview including how to access them. Please bear in mind that those benefits, privileges and entitlements that are mentioned may not be applicable to everyone.

With input from survivors, this guide was designed to give you a clear idea of how the Department of Defense will assist you from your first meeting with your casualty assistance officer. It covers the planning and details of the funeral or memorial service, and continues through the application and processing of all benefits and entitlements.

This guide is updated twice a year to keep current on new policies and laws to ensure that you are getting the most up-to-date information. You may access the online version of this guide any time at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/survivorsguide>. Any comments or recommendations to help improve this guide are most welcome. You can submit them through your casualty assistance officer or service casualty office as appropriate.



Department of Defense – survivor survey

Beginning in early 2010, the Department of Defense began inviting all primary next of kin to participate in a survey that is designed to measure the effectiveness of its Casualty Assistance Program and the degree of satisfaction of those family members provided such assistance. The survey is strictly voluntary and anonymous. The primary next of kin will receive an initial letter about the survey six months after the loss of his or her loved one. The survey is web-based and takes about 15 minutes to complete. Upon request, a hard copy version of the survey will be provided for use in lieu of accessing the online survey. In the late summer/early fall of 2016, the survey will be conducted telephonically.

Family responses are held confidentially and will not be reported individually, unless specifically requested by the respondent, but rather are combined with the responses of other survey participants. The findings of the survey are reported to senior leadership along with recommendations on how we might better serve those who are receiving assistance.

The survey was developed in collaboration with the chiefs or heads of the service casualty affairs offices but, more importantly, with direct input from surviving family members. Your support in completing this survey is greatly appreciated and will assist us in identifying the strengths and weaknesses in our program.

II. Your Casualty Assistance Officer

We understand that you and your family may face tough decisions concerning your deceased loved one in addition to your concerns for the future of your family. To make sure you receive the highest level of support, you have been assigned a casualty assistance officer. This is the person to whom you should address your questions, as he or she will be your primary connection to the Department of Defense. The different branches of service have different titles for this person. In this booklet, we will use the term casualty assistance officer.

At different times during your loved one's military career, he or she was given the opportunity to make choices with regard to notification of next of kin, payment of death gratuity, unpaid pay and allowances and disposition of remains in the event he or she became a casualty. The Department of Defense Form 93, "Record of Emergency Data," provides this information. The Department of Defense is required to follow applicable laws and the instructions of your loved one with regard to these benefits and entitlements. Your casualty assistance officer will assist you in seeing that these instructions are carried out.

You may wonder how long your casualty assistance officer will assist you. This will depend on your circumstances. Your casualty assistance officer will continue to assist you until all benefits and entitlements for which you are eligible have been processed. Afterward, your service will have staff available to help you with any concerns that may arise. When family members are spread across several cities or states, there may be several casualty assistance officers involved.

Meeting your casualty assistance officer

Shortly after you have been notified of your loved one's death (if notification was not made by your casualty assistance officer), you will receive a phone call from your casualty assistance officer to arrange a visit. He or she will ask if you have any immediate concerns, confirm your mailing address

and arrange to meet with you at the earliest time and place convenient to you. It is important that you meet with your casualty assistance officer as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours of his or her call. The first visit will be brief, probably less than an hour. The main purpose of this first visit is to exchange information. In some cases, your casualty assistance officer may ask to meet with you in private. It may feel like a tremendous amount of information to deal with, coming so quickly after learning of the death of your loved one. You may want assistance from a counselor, a doctor, an interpreter or even a member of your church. Your casualty assistance officer can help you connect with these support providers. You may have other family members present if you desire.

The military services have different titles for their casualty assistance officers:

Army

Casualty assistance officer

Marine Corps

Casualty assistance calls officer

Navy

Casualty assistance calls officer

Air Force

Casualty assistance representative

Coast Guard

Casualty assistance calls officer

You will be asked to provide an address where you may be reached for the next 45 days. If this is not the same as your current mailing address, you should provide both your current and future addresses. These addresses will be used to provide you with information from your casualty assistance officer, the Department of Defense and other concerned parties. Please let your casualty assistance officer know immediately if this information changes.

Verifying family information

Your casualty assistance officer will also need to verify the accuracy of the family information in Department of Defense records. It is his or her job to confirm the status of all known family members, including the marital status of the deceased service member, any previous marriages, divorce decrees and child custody orders. Casualty assistance officers will not request sensitive personal data such as Social Security numbers, birth dates or banking information over the phone. Your casualty assistance officer may ask for copies of important documents. Without these documents, benefits may be delayed or denied.

It is especially important to identify all the service member's children. Occasionally a service member has not identified all children on the Record of Emergency Data. Please don't be offended if your casualty assistance officer asks you whether a loved one was married before and if there are any children from that or other relationships. Also, he or she will want to know if the deceased service member was known by a name other than the given name, such as a nickname, middle name or maiden name.

Because of federal law and individual service member elections, it is possible that the primary next of kin, the person eligible to receive personal effects and the person authorized to direct disposition of human remains could be the same person. It is equally possible that they could be three different people. Each designation will be fully explained to you.

Your casualty assistance officer will schedule a follow-up visit soon after the initial visit. There will be as many follow-up visits as necessary. Depending on your service, you may also meet with a mortuary affairs officer. During these meetings you will discuss payment of the death gratuity, preparation for the funeral, any honors due to your loved one and any questions you may have.

Responding to the media

Newspapers, radio and television often provide information about local service members who have given their lives in service of our country. It is your choice whether you wish to speak to the media directly or maintain your privacy and have the military support you in your dealings with the media. If you would like assistance, your casualty assistance officer can help by putting you in touch with a public affairs officer who is accustomed to dealing with the media. You will be able to discuss whatever information you would like to share and how you would like to share it.

Next of kin

The person most closely related to the service member is considered primary next of kin. Federal statutes provide certain benefits to a service member's relatives and, in some cases, to non-family members. Some benefits are based upon a person's relationship to the service member and the role he or she played in the service member's life. Other benefits are based on choices made by the service member.

As a matter of policy, the Department of Defense, which includes the military services, will not release any casualty information to the media or the general public until 24 hours after the last next of kin has been notified. In multi-loss incidents, the 24-hour requirement will start after the last next of kin of all decedents has been notified.

Privacy act and authorization for disclosure of information

The Department of Defense requires detailed information from you in order to fully assist you in the settlement of your loved one's personal affairs and financial accounts, with regard to his or her military service, as well as the initiation of any survivor benefits that may apply to you. You are not required to provide this information but without it, your casualty assistance officer may not be able to assist you in settling your loved one's personal affairs or applying for certain benefits. This information may also be used by other government agencies, as well as other selected agencies, such as an insurance company or bank, to process or disburse benefits and entitlements. The Department of Defense will store some or all of this information in the Defense Casualty Information Processing System, which is a controlled access information system that the services use to manage each casualty case.

Because the Department of Defense receives many requests from private individuals, organizations, federal and state elected members of government and other reputable sources asking for family member contact information, you may also be asked whether you consent to have certain information provided to interested elected officials or to third-party benefactors who may wish to extend their condolences or provide support such as gifts, monetary assistance or scholarships. This decision is entirely up to you. United States privacy laws bar the government from releasing your private information to third-parties without your written consent. Additionally, while there may be many offers to families of deceased service members, each organization has its own criteria and receipt of such gifts or offers is not automatic. If you have specific questions about any unsolicited contact from an organization, ask your casualty assistance officer for assistance and further information.



Remember...

Even if new issues emerge months after a service member's death, your service Casualty Assistance Program remains a resource. You should feel free to call your service Casualty Assistance Program with any concerns you may have.

III. Funeral and/or Memorial Service

Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer is prepared to discuss your options for a funeral as well as burial of your loved one. Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will also help you understand the government entitlements and reimbursement for the costs associated with these services.

Decisions relating to funerals and burials are the responsibility of the person authorized to direct disposition of human remains. All service members are required to name a PADD on their Record of Emergency Data form. According to federal law, a PADD is the person identified by the decedent on the record of emergency data, regardless of the relationship of the designee to the decedent. Married



service members are not required to name their spouse as the PADD. When a service member dies while on active duty or active duty for training, the Department of Defense will assume responsibility for the preparation, casketing and transportation of your service member to the destination chosen by the PADD. However, if you wish, you can engage a funeral director to perform these services and make private arrangements. Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will be able to assist you with your decision.

Transporting your loved one

There are two types of escorts authorized to accompany your loved one: a military member selected by the deceased member's command or appointed by the service casualty office, or a person designated by the PADD. A family escort requires official approval. Obtaining this approval can be a lengthy process, which may cause a delay in moving your service member. Your casualty assistance officer can provide you with details.

If the service member died overseas and burial will be in the United States, your loved one will be returned to the United States as soon as possible, usually within a few days depending on the circumstances and location of loss. Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will be given the date and time when your service member is scheduled to arrive at his or her final destination. Weather conditions and flight cancellations can alter schedules. For this reason, you should delay choosing a date for the funeral until your service member has arrived. This will avoid the need to change the date of the funeral, which might add confusion and stress to this already strenuous time.

Seeing your loved one

You may be wondering if you will be able to see your loved one. Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will be able to discuss this with you. A licensed mortician will make a recommendation concerning the viewing of your service member. If seeing your loved one is likely to cause additional stress, you may have your funeral director view your loved one first and then advise you whether viewing is in your best interest.



Burial location

The PADD, who is designated by the service member, will determine where the burial will take place. If a designation is not recorded, the PADD is determined in accordance with existing laws and regulations. The deceased's branch of service will provide reasonable assistance to affect the PADD's decision on burial location. Most active-duty service members are eligible for interment in Arlington National Cemetery or any other national cemetery that is open for new interments. Information on burial in a national cemetery is available at <http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/index.asp> or <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil>. Your funeral director will assist you with burial arrangements in any cemetery, including Arlington and other national cemeteries.

Transportation of family

Travel to burial

The government will provide transportation to the burial site for members of the service member's immediate family, including the surviving spouse, children, the parents of both the service member and the surviving spouse, the siblings of the service member, and the PADD. If family members prefer to make their own arrangements, they may be reimbursed up to the government rate. Eligible family members can be authorized to receive travel and per diem expenses to attend the funeral. The PADD may elect two close family members if no authorized travelers use their travel entitlement. We recommend that family members not make any travel plans until they have spoken with their casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer.

Gold Star Lapel Button and Next of Kin Lapel Button

These will be presented to the spouse, children, parents and siblings of deceased active-duty members prior to the funeral or interment service.

The military services present the Gold Star Lapel Button to the immediate family members of U.S. service members who lost their lives while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States, while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, while serving with friendly forces engaged in an armed conflict in which the United States is not a belligerent party against an opposing armed force, as the result of an international terrorist attack against the United States or a foreign nation friendly to the United States or as the result of military operations while serving outside the United States as part of a peacekeeping force. 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 opposite side bears the inscription, "United States of America, Act of Congress, 1 August 1966."

The Next of Kin Lapel Pin is provided to the family of service members who lost their lives while serving on active duty or while serving in a drill status as a member of the National Guard or reserves. The Next of Kin Lapel Button 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.

These buttons are a symbol of our appreciation of a service member's tremendous sacrifice to country and service, and of the families of these brave men and women. Contact your respective military service for more information.

Travel to memorial service

Your loved one's military unit may schedule a memorial service as a way for fellow unit members to honor him or her. You may be eligible for funded travel to the memorial service. Your service can provide you with details.

Military honors

Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will be able to discuss with you any military honors due to your service member. If you choose a military funeral, the casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will help plan the funeral service. This could include coordinating with military or civilian clergy, arranging for the funeral honors detail, obtaining interment flags and presenting the flags and other awards. During the funeral honors ceremony, the spouse of the service member, the PADD and each child of the decedent will receive a flag, as will the member's parents. Divorced parents will each receive a flag. Specific information about burial honors can be found at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh>.

Private arrangements

If you choose to make private arrangements you may be reimbursed for normal expenses. The maximum reimbursable amount depends on the conditions selected for burial. For example, when the service arranges for preparation and casket (selected by the family) and your service member is consigned directly for burial in a government cemetery, the maximum reimbursable amount is \$1,000; however, if the family chooses to arrange for preparation, casketing and burial in a private cemetery, then the maximum reimbursable amount is \$8,800. Transportation costs are covered by the service. Before making any financial commitments, it is recommended that you verify that the expense is reimbursable by speaking with your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer. We want you to be able to make informed decisions and not experience additional anguish because of any misunderstandings. Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will assist the person filing the claim and ensure all required receipts and other supporting documents are submitted.

Regardless of whether the family chooses military or private arrangements, your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will assist you and your funeral director in coordinating interment activities. This may include transporting family members, arranging lodging and confirming departure arrangements.

Should the PADD choose to have your service member buried overseas, the service's mortuary affairs office will arrange for transportation to the place of final burial.

Return of personal effects

The prompt delivery of the deceased service member's personal belongings is an important function of your loved one's commanding officer. Your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer will provide specific information concerning the return of your loved one's personal effects. Whenever possible, he or she will be present to help when the property is delivered.

Legal assistance

Should you desire legal assistance, your casualty assistance officer will request an appointment with a Department of Defense legal assistance officer if you are the primary next of kin or the decedent's legally recognized estate representative. The casualty assistance officer will attend the meeting with you if requested to do so. The legal assistance officer will advise you on legal issues that can have a profound effect on the benefits and entitlements you receive. The legal assistance office will also assist in the preparation of income tax returns and can explain the tax implications of various benefit-related elections that you may be asked to make. It is important to review the service member's will and any estate-planning documents before applying for insurance or other monetary benefits. These documents could have a major impact on the results of these filings.

Investigative reports

Your casualty assistance officer can help you obtain copies of official or investigative reports. Requests for any report should include a copy of the Report of Casualty (DD Form 1300) as well as a copy of your government-issued photo ID card or state-issued driver's license.



IV. Money Matters

There are many agencies with a sincere interest in helping you and your family as you move through this challenging time. As a surviving family member of a deceased service member, you may be eligible for an array of benefits and entitlements. Your casualty assistance officer is your guide through this sometimes overwhelming process. He or she will assist you should you need additional information or help filling out any necessary forms.

Department of Defense benefits

Death gratuity

The death gratuity is a lump-sum payment made by the Department of Defense to the survivors or other individuals identified by the service member prior to his or her death while on active duty, active duty for training, inactive duty for training or within 120 days of release from active duty if the death is due to a service-related disability. The amount of death gratuity is \$100,000 and is tax exempt.

Effective July 1, 2008, a service member may designate one or more persons to receive all or a portion of the death gratuity payment. The designation of a person to receive a portion of the death gratuity will be identified by the service member as a percentage of the total amount in 10 percent increments. Any amount not designated by the member will be paid to the living survivors of the member in accordance with existing law and regulation.

The death gratuity will normally be paid to the eligible beneficiaries within 72 hours of notification. Depending upon your service, you may elect to receive the money via electronic fund transfer or by check. If you prefer a check, it will be delivered by your casualty assistance officer or the service casualty office.

Online Survivor Benefits Report

Your casualty assistance officer should provide you with an initial survivor benefits report and, if you would like, may assist you with obtaining a Department of Defense self-service logon premium account — or DS logon premium account — that will provide you access to an interactive online survivor benefits report. This report can be accessed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The report displays current and estimated future benefits (including Social Security benefits, VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Survivor Benefit Plan, Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance and the VA Dependents' Educational Assistance) and allows survivors to input “what if” changes to family members' education status and plans, disability status and marital status. Current or “what if” reports can be saved or printed. To access the report, surviving spouses need a DS logon premium account and password; the DS logon is a secure, self-service logon ID that allows individuals affiliated with the Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs to access several websites using a single username and password. A DS logon premium account may be created through the Defense Manpower Data Center's website at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement>. After creating the account and password, email osbr@afsc.com or call the family assistance support team at 877-827-2471 to have your DS logon user ID linked to your record or ask any questions.

To log in and view personal reports, select the appropriate branch of service below and follow the instructions on the site.

- Army - <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/PreBuilt/customapps/Casualty/login.aspx>
- Marine Corps - <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/prebuilt/usmc>
- Navy - <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/prebuilt/usn>
- Air Force - <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/prebuilt/usaf>
- Coast Guard - <https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/prebuilt/uscg/Casualty/login.aspx>

Disbursement of pay and allowances

Any pay or allowances due to the service member at the time of death will be paid to the designated beneficiary or a legal representative. Normally, pay and allowances due to the deceased service member will be limited to money earned during the month of death or since the last pay day. Service members have the right to name any person as beneficiary for money remaining due at time of death. In the absence of the service member's written instructions, money due will be paid to survivors in the order listed below:

- Spouse
- Children in equal shares
- Parents
- Duly appointed legal representative of the estate

This is taxable income. The Defense Finance and Accounting Center will automatically forward necessary claim forms to the beneficiaries.

Burial benefits

The Department of Defense will care for, transport and inter your loved one. The surviving spouse, children and siblings of the service member, as well as the parents of both the service member and surviving spouse are authorized to receive travel entitlements. If the spouse, children or parents choose not to travel to the funeral, the person authorized to direct disposition of human remains and two close relatives may use this benefit.

Travel entitlement includes round-trip transportation and two days per diem upon arrival at the interment site. It is advisable to delay making any travel plans until after speaking with your casualty assistance officer or mortuary officer. This will ensure that transportation and arrival times are coordinated for maximum support and that no unauthorized expenses are incurred with the expectation of reimbursement.

Survivor Benefit Plan

Your casualty assistance officer will schedule a meeting with a retirement services officer, an experienced counselor who can provide information about survivor benefits and help you with completing the applications.

Surviving spouses or children of service members who die in the line of duty while on active duty may be entitled to Survivor Benefit Plan payments. The automatic monthly Survivor Benefit Plan death benefit is provided at no cost, as service members do not pay into this benefit when on active duty. Retirees, however, do pay for this purchased annuity as part of the military's retirement package. The

Survivor Benefit Plan is not meant to be a complete estate plan, so other insurance and investments are important as well.

The Survivor Benefit Plan annuity for a survivor of a service member who died on active duty pays a benefit equal to 55 percent of their retirement pay if he or she had been retired at 100 percent disability at the time of death. The amount of the “retired pay” depends on the pay grade and time in service at the date of death.



By law, the Survivor Benefit Plan annuity of surviving spouses who also qualify for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs (see below), is offset dollar-for-dollar.

Spouses may request “child only” Survivor Benefit Plan benefits. This option is helpful because DIC payments to or for children do not affect Survivor Benefit Plan payments, so those payments are not reduced by the amount of DIC awarded. Survivor Benefit Plan payments are subject to federal income taxes; DIC payments are tax exempt, giving the surviving spouse more “take home” income.

If the spouse remarries before age 55, the Survivor Benefit Plan annuity is suspended but can be reinstated if the remarriage ends by death or divorce. If remarriage occurs at 55 or older, the annuity continues uninterrupted for the duration of the spouse’s life. The Department of Defense Military Compensation provides more detailed information at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/Benefits/SurvivorBenefitProgram/Overview.aspx>. More information about managing your Survivor Benefit Plan account may be found at <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/survivors/manage.html>.

A Survivor Benefit Plan annuity is taxable income at the IRS tax rates established for the individual receiving the annuity. In most cases, an annuity paid to a child will be taxed at the tax rate of the parent. However, this is not true in every case. Anyone in receipt of Survivor Benefit Plan annuity income should consult with a tax advisor to ensure that their individual circumstances can be considered before reporting the income for tax purposes. Anyone receiving a Survivor Benefit Plan annuity is eligible for tax assistance at a military legal office.

Department of Veterans Affairs benefits

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

This compensation will probably be the most important part of your long-range financial planning. It is paid to eligible survivors of active-duty service members and survivors of those veterans whose deaths are determined by the Department of Veterans Affairs to be service-related. It is a flat monthly payment, independent of the pay grade of the veteran. The 2016 spouse DIC monthly rate is \$1,254.19. This payment is adjusted annually for cost of living increases and is non-taxable.

To help ease your transition, the VA also adds a transitional benefit of \$270 to the surviving spouse’s monthly DIC if there are children under age 18. The amount is based on a family unit, not individual children. It is paid for two

DIC for Surviving Children In the Absence of a Surviving Spouse

Surviving Children Entitlement	Lump amount	Rate for one
Number of children	Total payable	Each child share
1	\$ 529.55	\$ 529.55
2	\$ 761.80	\$ 380.90
3	\$ 994.07	\$ 331.35
4	\$ 1,182.96	\$ 295.74
5	\$ 1,371.87	\$ 274.37
6	\$1,560.77	\$ 260.12
7	\$ 1,749.68	\$ 249.95
8	\$ 1,938.57	\$ 242.32
9	\$ 2,127.48	\$ 236.38

years from the date that entitlement to DIC commences, but is discontinued earlier when the child reaches age 18.

It is important to remember that DIC benefits, as with all other benefits, will not be paid unless you apply for them. Your casualty assistance officer can arrange for you to meet with the local VA office to file your application. Certain documents must be submitted with the application. Survivors of active duty service members will need the following:

- Completed VA Form 21-534a, “Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation by a Surviving Spouse or Child”
- DD Form 1300, “Report of Casualty”

This benefit is payable for the life of the spouse, provided the spouse does not remarry before the age of 57. However, should a remarriage end, DIC benefits can be reinstated. Income from other sources does not affect eligibility. The only requirements are proof of relationship to the deceased service member and that the service member’s death was service-connected.

The rate of compensation increases for a spouse with one or more children with the deceased veteran. The 2016 monthly benefit for each child under 18 is \$310.71. Additional allowance for a dependent can continue under the following circumstances:

- Until the child marries or turns 18
- If the child is between the ages of 18 and 23 and is attending a VA-approved institution of higher learning
- For life, if the child becomes incapable of self-support prior to age 18

If there is no surviving spouse, DIC will be paid in equal shares to the children of the deceased veteran. The total monthly benefit will be slightly different, as shown on the table. For more information contact your local VA office, access the VA website at <http://www.va.gov> or call 800-827-1000.

Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance

Since October 2008, surviving spouses whose SBP payments have been offset (partially or totally) as a result of receiving DIC are eligible for the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance. Monthly payments are taxable and will be paid as follows:

- Fiscal 2009 - \$50
- Fiscal 2010 - \$60
- Fiscal 2011 - \$70
- Fiscal 2012 - \$80
- Fiscal 2013 - \$90
- Fiscal 2014 - \$150
- Fiscal 2015 - \$200
- Fiscal 2016 - \$275
- Fiscal 2017 - \$310

These payments terminate on Oct. 1, 2017.

Parents’ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

The surviving parent(s) of a service member who died in the line of duty or of a veteran whose death resulted from a service-related injury or illness may be eligible to receive Parents’ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Parents’ DIC is tax-free income. Eligibility and the benefit rate is based on an income below a limit that is established by law.

The Parents' DIC rate charts may be found at http://benefits.va.gov/Pension/current_rates_Parents_DIC_pen.asp.

This benefit is not automatic and requires an application. Your casualty assistance officer can take you to a Veterans Affairs regional office and have a VA employee assist you, or you may complete VA Form 21-535 and mail it to the regional office in your area, or you may choose to work with an accredited representative or agent. For more detailed information, go to http://benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/types-dependency_and_indemnity_parents.asp.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance is a program of low-cost group life insurance for service members on active duty, ready reservists, members of the National Guard, members of the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Public Health Service, cadets and midshipmen of the four service academies and members of the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

As of Sept. 1, 2005, the maximum amount of SGLI coverage is \$400,000. The SGLI coverage is available in increments of \$50,000. Service members are automatically insured under SGLI for the maximum coverage unless they elect in writing to reduce the amount of coverage or cancel it entirely. Benefits are non-taxable.

Upon the death of the service member, SGLI payment is made by the Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance to the service member's beneficiary in either a lump-sum payment or in 36 equal monthly installments as specified by the service member. Eligible beneficiaries may elect to change the lump-sum payment to 36 equal monthly payments; however, they cannot change the 36 equal monthly payments to lump sum.

If the proceeds are to be paid in a lump-sum payment, the beneficiary will be given the option of receiving the lump-sum payment either through the Prudential Alliance Account or by check or through electronic funds transfer. The SGLV forms 8283 (to claim SGLI proceeds) and 8283A (to claim family SGLI proceeds for a deceased spouse or dependent) have been updated to reflect EFT as a payment option. Access both forms at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/resources-forms.asp>.

Alliance Account

Alliance is not available for payments less than \$5,000, payments to individuals residing outside the United States and its territories and certain other payments. These will be paid by check or through electronic funds transfer.

An Alliance Account is an interest-bearing draft account established in the beneficiary's name with a draft book. The beneficiary can write drafts (checks) for any amount up to the full amount of the proceeds. There are no monthly service fees or per check charges, and additional checks can be ordered at no cost. Fees do apply for some special services including returned checks, stop-payment orders and copies of statements/checks.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Payment and Eligibility

Any questions concerning payment of SGLI, eligibility for Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance or questions on Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection should be addressed to:

Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance
80 Livingston Ave.
Roseland, NJ 07068-1733

See also the relevant website, phone numbers and email address on [Page 31](#) in the Additional Resources section.

The funds in an Alliance Account begin earning interest immediately and will continue to earn interest until all funds are withdrawn. Interest is accrued daily, compounded daily and credited every month. The interest rate may change and will vary over time subject to a minimum rate that will not change more than once every 90 days. You will be advised in advance of any change to the minimum interest rate via your quarterly Alliance Account statement or by calling customer support at 877-255-4262.

The Alliance Account is a contractual obligation of Prudential and backed by the financial strength of the company. While the account is not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, every state has a state guaranty association that is legally obligated to guaranty payment of at least \$250,000, with most states providing \$300,000 in protection and a few providing protection of up to \$500,000. These associations have met all obligations since they were created more than 25 years ago.

If the service member did not select an SGLI beneficiary, the law requires the insurance be paid in the following order of precedence:

- Spouse
- Children in equal share
- Parent or parents in equal shares
- A duly appointed executor or administrator of the estate
- The next of kin entitled to payment under the law of the service member's state of residence

If you are an SGLI beneficiary, your casualty assistance officer will assist you with completing the necessary claims forms. If you are not the beneficiary, privacy laws forbid the government from divulging the name of the beneficiary to you.

More information about the SGLI Program is available on the VA website: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/index.asp>.

Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance

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. Coverage is automatically provided for spouses and dependent children of service members covered by the SGLI program, except in the case of service members married to service members on or after Jan. 2, 2013, who will need to fill out appropriate forms to opt into the program. This coverage provides up to a maximum of \$100,000 of insurance coverage for a spouse, not to exceed the amount of SGLI coverage the insured member has in force. Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance also provides \$10,000 for dependent children. The service member is the only beneficiary of the FSGLI policy. The service member must pay premiums for spousal coverage based on the age of the service member's spouse. There are no premium charges for FSGLI coverage for dependent children, as the coverage is provided automatically to those service members enrolled in SGLI.

When SGLI coverage ends, dependent child coverage cannot be converted into a commercial policy. Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance spousal coverage may be converted to a commercial policy with a participating company within the following:



- 120 days after the date of an election made in writing by the member to terminate the coverage, or the earliest of
- 120 days after the date of the member's death,
- 120 days after the member's release from service or
- 120 days after the termination of the marriage.

For additional information about FSGLI, call OSGLI at 800-419-1473 for conversion information and a list of participating companies, or visit the VA website: <http://benefits.va.gov/insurance/fsgli.asp>

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection

Traumatic Injury Protection under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, a rider added to SGLI, provides financial assistance to service members who have incurred certain physical losses due to traumatic injuries. Benefits range from \$25,000 to \$100,000 depending on the nature of the loss. All service members who are insured in the SGLI program are automatically covered by TSGLI.

For a deceased service member's survivors to be eligible for payment under the TSGLI program, the service member must have suffered a qualifying loss and survived for a period of not less than seven full days from the date of the traumatic injury. The seven-day period begins on the date and time of the traumatic injury, as measured by Greenwich Mean Time, and ends 168 full hours later.

Insurance proceeds will then be paid to the beneficiary named by the service member on his or her SGLI application. If no named beneficiary exists, then proceeds will be paid based on the by-law designation as noted above under the SGLI program.

More information about the TSGLI Program is available on the VA website: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/tsgli.asp>.

Beneficiary financial counseling services

Financial counseling services are offered to beneficiaries of SGLI, FSGLI and TSGLI. This cost-free service is offered by Financial Point. Financial Point provides beneficiaries with valuable personalized financial information and expert consultation to ensure they have the tools necessary to manage their finances effectively. They will not try to sell you anything but merely provide financial advice to assist you. Beneficiaries have two years to request financial counseling services and another two years to use those services. Beneficiaries paid through the Alliance Account have access to the services as long as their accounts remain open. Financial Point can be reached at 888-243-7351 or via email at FCS@financialpoint.com.

VA home loans

Surviving spouses who have not remarried may be eligible for a VA home loan guaranty. A VA guaranty helps protect lenders from loss if the borrower fails to repay the loan. Eligible surviving spouses can use the VA home loan guaranty to buy a home, build a home or refinance an existing loan. Additional information about the VA home loan program is available on the VA website at <http://benefits.va.gov/homeloans/index.asp>.

Bereavement counseling

The VA Office of Readjustment Counseling offers bereavement counseling to families of service members who die on active duty. These services are available to you through offices at the community-based Vet Centers throughout the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands. For more information call 202-461-6530 or email vet.center.bereavement@va.gov. You can also visit the Vet Center website at http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/Bereavement_Counseling.asp.

Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits

The VA offers a number of education benefits for family members who have lost a service member. For general information about these benefits, visit <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/index.asp>. Information about several programs is provided below.

Veterans Educational Assistance Program

The Veterans Educational Assistance Program was one of several education incentive programs offered to service members who entered active duty between Jan. 1, 1977, and June 30, 1985. If your loved one participated in the Veterans Educational Assistance Program, the VA will pay a refund equal to the amount contributed, less any benefits paid, to the service member's surviving beneficiaries designated on the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance election form, or to the estate if no SGLI form is on record. In cases involving multiple beneficiaries, each beneficiary must submit a separate refund request. More information may be found at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/veap.asp>.

Montgomery GI Bill®

The VA will pay a special Montgomery GI Bill® death benefit to a designated survivor in the event of the service-connected death of a service member while on active duty or within one year after discharge or release. The deceased must either have been entitled to educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill® program or a participant in the program who would have been so entitled but for the high school diploma or length-of-service requirement. The amount paid will be equal to the participant's actual military pay reduction, less any education benefits paid. Additional information is located at http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/montgomery_bill.asp.

The Post-9/11 GI-Bill®

If your loved one transferred any months of unused Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits before their death, you may be able to start using this benefit immediately as a spouse for up to 15 years from the date of your loved one's death. If unused months were transferred to a child, the benefit may be used if your loved one died while serving on active duty or completed at least 10 years of service in the armed forces. Children may use the benefit if they have attained a secondary school diploma (or equivalency certificate) or reached 18 years of age. Children are not subject to the 15-year delimiting date but may not use the benefit after reaching 26 years of age. For more information, go to http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/post911_transfer.asp.

Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship

Children and surviving spouses of those who died in the line of duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, are potentially eligible to receive the Fry Scholarship. Eligible children and surviving spouses are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100 percent level. Children may use the benefit until they reach 33 years of age, while surviving spouses may use the benefit up to 15 years after the service member's death.

Children and surviving spouses eligible for the Fry Scholarship may also be eligible for Dependents' Educational Assistance. A child whose parent died before Aug. 1, 2011, may use one program at a time, and combined benefits are capped at a total of 81 months. A child whose parent died after July 31, 2011, and surviving spouses whose service member died on or after Sept. 11, 2001, must make an irrevocable election of which benefit he or she wishes to receive for any and all school enrollments beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2015. More information may be found at http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/fry_scholarship.pdf.

Survivor and dependents' assistance

Surviving spouses are eligible for educational benefits for up to 20 years after the date of the service member's death. A child whose parent died after July 31, 2011, and surviving spouses whose service member died on or after Sept. 11, 2001, must make an irrevocable election of which benefit, the Dependents' Educational Assistance or the Fry Scholarship, he or she wishes to receive for any and all school enrollments beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2015. A comparison chart for surviving spouses with both DEA and Fry Scholarship eligibility is located at http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/survivor_dependent_assistance.asp.

Special benefits

Dependents over the age of 14 with physical or mental disabilities that impair their ability to pursue an education may receive benefits for specialized vocational or restorative training, including speech and voice correction, language retraining, lip reading, auditory training, Braille reading and writing, and similar programs. Certain disabled or surviving spouses are also eligible.

Assistance from the Social Security Administration

Monthly Social Security payments are paid to a spouse or a divorced spouse with children of the deceased service member under the age of 16, or disabled children in their care who meet the eligibility requirements. Monthly payments are also paid to children under the age of 18, or 19 if they are full-time students, or older children who were disabled before the age of 18. The amount paid will be determined by the Social Security Administration.

Up to \$255 in Social Security benefits may be paid to the surviving spouse living with the member at the time of death. The fact that a service member was temporarily away from home on a military assignment will not preclude a finding of living together. If there is no surviving spouse, the sum is paid to the child or children who are eligible for Social Security benefits for the month of death. If more than one child is eligible for the month of death, the sum is divided equally among all such children. No other survivors are entitled to this benefit. You should make your claim through the nearest Social Security office. Your casualty assistance officer may contact the Social Security Administration Expedited Claim Unit (866-777-7887) on your behalf in order for benefits to begin within 24 hours. Supporting documentation will be necessary within 60 days or benefits will stop. For more information, go to <https://www.ssa.gov>.

Ongoing military benefits

Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools

Effective May 14, 2009, dependents of service members who die on active duty may continue in Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools without limitations, either on their physical residence or on school transition points, until they graduate or relocate to another school system.

Health care, commissary and exchange

The death of your loved one does not end your rights to certain service benefits and privileges. You may use the installation theater and some other Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities. You are also eligible to continue to receive TRICARE benefits under TRICARE Prime at the active-duty rate for three years at no cost, and afterward at the retiree family member rate, which will require you to pay a premium. You are also eligible to continue shopping at the exchange and commissary indefinitely unless you remarry. Unmarried children of the deceased service member may use these privileges, at no cost, until they are 21, or 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study in a secondary school or in a full-time course of study in an institution of higher education. Family members must ensure their information listed in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System is updated. This system identifies and validates TRICARE eligibility and address information. You may verify the information on your DEERS record or update your address by calling the DMDC Support Office at 800-538-9552. Updates to DEERS may be completed at the nearest uniformed services identification card center. To locate the nearest military ID card facility, visit the Defense Manpower Data Center website at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl>.

TRICARE Dental Program survivor benefit

When a military sponsor dies while on active duty for more than 30 consecutive days, a surviving spouse is eligible to receive TRICARE Dental Program benefits for three years from the month following the sponsor's death. Unmarried children of the deceased service member may use the privileges, at no cost, until they are 21, or 23 if enrolled in a full-time course of study in a secondary school or in a full-time course of study in an institution of higher education. Incapacitated children are eligible to receive TDP coverage for the greater of three years from the sponsor's date of death, the date which the dependent turns 21, or, if enrolled in a full-time accredited college or university, the date the dependent turns 23.



Eligible surviving family members not enrolled at the time of their sponsor's death are not automatically enrolled in the TDP Survivor Benefit. Eligible surviving family members not enrolled in the TDP will be notified of their eligibility for the TDP. The surviving spouse, parent or dependent 18 years or older must complete the enrollment process for the TDP Survivor Benefit to take effect.

Surviving family members may be eligible for the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program once the three-year TDP Survivor Benefit ends. The TRDP also may be available to surviving family members who do not qualify for the TDP Survivor Benefit. For more information about the TRDP, visit <http://www.tricare.mil>.

Housing and allowances

If you are living in government housing as an authorized dependent, you are eligible to continue living in government housing for a year from the date of your loved one's death. Should you decide to move out of government housing before the 365th day after your loved one's death, you will be paid a basic allowance for housing, known as BAH, for the unused 365 days at the current rate of basic allowance for housing for your loved one's pay grade (you may access the BAH calculator at <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bah.cfm>). If you should desire to remain in quarters past the 365th day, a written request must be submitted to the installation commander via the appropriate housing office. If approved, rental charges at the current rate may be applied, as the BAH entitlement ends 365 days after the date of the member's death. If you are in leased government housing, the 365 day rule and payment of BAH for any unused days still applies.

If you are not living in government housing at the time of your loved one's death, you will be provided a lump-sum payment of 365 days BAH at the current rate for your loved one's pay grade.

If you are a surviving spouse and a member in the armed services, you are also eligible to receive BAH as an authorized dependent. This allowance is paid in addition to any other pay and allowances to which the surviving spouse is entitled to as a service member.

You are also authorized one relocation move at government expense that must be completed within three years of the death of your loved one. A request for an extension may be made if necessary. Please contact the transportation office at the installation nearest to you. Your casualty assistance officer may also help you with this request. A directory of military installations is located at <http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/f?p=MI:ENTRY:0>. You may access the Relocation Assistance Program to help you get organized, make smart financial decisions, understand your allowances and manage the stress and grief of moving without your loved one at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/on-and-off-base-living/moving>.

Legal assistance

Should you need legal advice on benefits, entitlements, insurance, taxation or other matters, military legal assistance may be available to you. Legal services are available on all military installations, and your casualty assistance officer can help arrange for an office visit or a phone conversation with a legal expert if you are not near an installation.

ID card

In order to use the services you are entitled to, you must identify yourself as the dependent of a deceased service member. However, you will need a new ID card. Your casualty assistance officer can help you with this.

Posthumous citizenship

This is an honorary status commemorating the bravery and sacrifice of deceased service members. It does not convey any uniformed services benefits under the Immigration and Nationality Act to any relative of the deceased service member.

Section 329A of the INA provides for grants of posthumous citizenship to certain members of the U.S. military services. Other provisions of law extend benefits to surviving spouses, children and parents. A member of the U.S. military services who served honorably during a designated period of hostilities and dies as a result of injury or disease incurred in, or aggravated by, that service (including death in combat), may receive posthumous citizenship.

The service member's next of kin, the secretary of defense or the secretary's designee in the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services must make this request for posthumous citizenship within two years of the service member's death.

Under section 319(d) of the INA, a surviving spouse, child or parent of a U.S. citizen who dies while serving honorably in active duty status in the U.S. military services can file for naturalization if the family member meets naturalization requirements other than residency and physical presence.

For other immigration purposes, a surviving spouse (unless he or she remarries), child or parent of a member of the U.S. military services who served honorably on active duty and died as a result of combat and was a citizen at the time of death (including a posthumous grant of citizenship) is considered an immediate relative for two years after the service member dies and may file a petition for classification as an immediate relative during such period.

Additional information and assistance can be obtained by calling the USCIS military help line at 877-247-4645 or accessing the USCIS website at <https://www.uscis.gov/military>.

Income taxes

When a service member dies on active duty, the Internal Revenue Service may forgive the amount of federal tax that the service member would have paid, as well as refund the tax paid for a period of time prior to the death. Assistance with filing income taxes is available at most military installations during tax season. Additional information can be obtained by calling Military OneSource at 800-342-9647 or visiting the Military OneSource website at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>. This service is free of charge for eligible survivors and military identification card holders.

For information and guidance concerning your income tax status as a survivor of a service member, you can contact the nearest office of the Internal Revenue Service or view [IRS Publication 3, "Armed Forces' Tax Guide."](#) For income tax purposes, Social Security benefits, the death gratuity payment, the basic allowance for housing benefit, burial benefits, VA pension and compensation payment, property and the face amount of all life insurance policies are excluded from gross income.

Forgiveness of a decedent's tax liability

Tax liability can be forgiven, or refunded if already paid, if a service member dies under any of the following circumstances:

- While on active duty in a combat zone
- From wounds, disease or other injury received in a combat zone
- From wounds or injury incurred in a terrorist or military action

Combat zone-related forgiveness

If a member of the U.S. military services dies while in active service in a combat zone or from injury or disease received in a combat zone, the decedent's income tax liability is forgiven for the tax year in which the death occurred and for an earlier tax year ending on or after the first day the member served in a combat zone in active service. Forgiven tax is tax that does not have to be paid. Any forgiven tax liability that has already been paid will be refunded, and any tax liability at the date of death will be forgiven.

In addition, any unpaid taxes for prior years will be forgiven and any prior year taxes paid after the date of death will be refunded. This provision also applies to members of the military services serving

outside the combat zone if the service was in direct support of military operations in the zone, and qualified the member for military pay for duty subject to hostile fire or imminent danger.

Contributions of military death gratuities to Roth IRAs and education savings accounts

The Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-245, §109) allows a beneficiary of a \$100,000 death gratuity or an SGLI payment to contribute all or part of the gratuity or payment to a Roth IRA or an education savings account. The account must be created within one year following receipt of the payment, and the normal rules limiting contributions to Roth IRAs and education savings accounts do not apply. For more information on this topic, please see your local legal assistance office.

Homeowners Assistance Program

The Homeowners Assistance Program is a program authorized by law and administered by the Army Corps of Engineers to assist eligible homeowners facing financial loss when selling their primary residence homes in areas where real estate values have declined because of an installation closure or realignment announcement. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 temporarily expanded the HAP to financially assist surviving spouses of service members who are killed in the line of duty or who died of wounds incurred while in the line of duty.

Surviving spouse eligibility

The spouse of a member of the military services or the U.S. Coast Guard is eligible for the program if he or she meets the following conditions:

- The service member dies as a result of a wound, injury or illness while deployed on or after Sept. 11, 2001.
- The spouse relocates from the member's primary residence within two years of the death of such spouse.

Program eligibility

For detailed information related to eligibility requirements for the HAP, visit the Army Corps of Engineers website at <http://hap.usace.army.mil> or write:

National Program Manager
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers (Department of Defense
Homeowners Assistance Program)
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Email: DODHAP1@usace.army.mil

V. Long-Term Casualty Assistance

Eventually your casualty assistance officer will return to his or her primary job full time, but not until matters relating to your loved one's case have been answered and all entitlements and benefits are being received. However, assistance to you does not stop here. Your casualty assistance officer should connect you with your service's long-term case management program, which will have expert case managers and counselors available to assist you in the years to come. You may access support groups, grief counseling, benefit assistance, milestone management (as you experience life changes, your benefits may change), financial counseling to assist with budgeting, investing, estate planning, tax issues and other long-term benefits.

Casualty assistance

Casualty assistance is an open-ended process. Simply because you may no longer have direct contact with your casualty assistance officer does not mean that assistance is no longer available. Please use this valuable resource for any additional assistance you may need.

To find your service's long-term case management program, you may contact:

- Army's Survivor Outreach Services at 855-707-2769 or visit <http://www.sos.army.mil>
- Navy Gold Star Program at 888-509-8759 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/NavyGoldStar>
- Marine Corps' Long Term Assistance Program at 866-210-3421 or <https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/webcenter/portal/MRAHome> (Click on "Casualty Assistance" under "Top Requests.")
- Air Force Families Forever at 866-299-0596 or visit <http://www.afpc.af.mil/library/airforcefamiliesforever.asp>

VI. Special Preference Programs for Employment

Widows, widowers and mothers of veterans may be able to take advantage of special preference programs when seeking employment with the federal government. These programs do not guarantee a job but do give a qualified candidate entry to the applicant pool.

Family Member Derived Preference

Derived preference is a plan in which the spouse, widow, widower or mother of a veteran may be eligible to claim the veteran's preference for certain federal positions if the service member or veteran is unable to use it. A 10-point (sometimes called XP) appointment preference is given when the eligibility criteria are met. For an overview of how veterans' preferences work, visit <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx> for the Feds Hire Vets Veterans' Preference page.

Both a mother and a spouse may be entitled to preference based on the service of the same veteran if they both meet the requirements. For additional information on eligibility criteria for widows, widowers or mothers of deceased veterans go to <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/familypref/index.aspx>.

Military Spouse Appointing Authority (Executive Order 13473)

Per Executive Order 13473, the Military Spouse Appointing Authority allows federal agencies to appoint a widow or widower without competition. Agencies can choose to fill competitive positions using this authority on a temporary, term or permanent basis.

The Military Spouse Appointing Authority is not a hiring preference or an entitlement, but widows and widowers should be aware of it because it allows for non-competitive entry into the competitive service. Knowing about the authority and identifying your eligibility may help in your job search. As you review vacancy announcements, look for positions that fall under the authority in the Who May Apply section. Spouses eligible for the Military Spouse Appointing Authority should seek all sources job announcements or merit promotion announcements. Following are the three categories of spouses considered under this authority:

- Spouses whose service-member partner has a 100 percent disability rating
- Spouses whose service member died while on active duty
- Military spouses who've recently made a permanent change of station move

Each category faces different eligibility criteria. For detailed information on eligibility criteria and the Military Spouse Appointing Authority for the noncompetitive appointment of certain military spouses, visit <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/hire/hrp/qaspouse>.

Other programs

Other federal, state and local employment programs are available to surviving family members, including the following:

- **State benefits** – Several states offer benefits for survivors of deceased military service members or spouses of service members with disabilities. These benefits may include educational assistance, loans and employment assistance. Your local Veterans Affairs office or local government officials can provide more information on what's available in your state. Connect with your state's VA office by using the State Veterans Affairs Offices locator at <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>.
- **Military Spouse Preference** – This program differs from the Military Spouse Appointing Authority. It offers a preference for certain Department of Defense civilian positions, including non-appropriated funds, or NAF, positions. This preference applies to the spouses of relocating service members, the spouses of deceased service members and the spouses of veterans with a 100 percent disability rating. Contact the nearest Department of Defense personnel office or visit <http://godefense.cpms.osd.mil/veterans/militaryspouses.aspx> for more information about the Department of Defense Military Spouse Preference program.

VII. Additional Resources

The inclusion of private organizations in the Additional Resources section does not constitute an endorsement of those organizations by the Department of Defense.

Military OneSource

800-342-9647

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/casualty-assistance-and-surviving-loss>

Military OneSource understands the needs of military family members who have lost a loved one. Surviving spouses, parents and children can turn to Military OneSource for information, resources and counseling support during their time of need. Help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by telephone or internet. Updates to “A Survivor’s Guide to Benefits” are available on the Military OneSource [Casualty page](#). Other services include the following:

- Online and telephonic non-medical counseling, as well as face-to-face counseling in the local community at no cost
- Confidential video non-medical counseling sessions at no cost
- Immediate support for those with emotional well-being issues
- Referrals to appropriate service branch agencies, aid agencies, charitable organizations, support groups and other resources
- Employment and career counseling
- Educational materials related to benefits, grief and other related issues
- Translation services for more than 150 languages

Additional contact information:

- From overseas 800-342-9647
Dialing instructions can be found on the Military OneSource website at Contact Us.
- From overseas, deployed or in remote areas only, you may call collect at 703-253-7599.

National Resource Directory

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/nrd>

This directory is an online partnership for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, their families and families of the fallen and those who support them.



Survivor benefits

Army Survivor Benefits

Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operation Center
800-626-3317
<https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/CMAOC>

Marine Corps Survivor Benefits

Marine Corps Casualty
800-847-1597
<https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/webcenter/portal/MRAHome> (Click on “Casualty Assistance” under “Top Requests.”)

Navy Survivor Benefits

Navy Casualty Assistance (PERS-13)
800-368-3202
<http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/casualty/Pages/default2.aspx>

Department of Veterans Affairs

A wealth of information concerning compensation and benefits for families of deceased service members is available from the VA.

Veterans Benefits Administration

800-827-1000
TDD: 800-829-4833
<http://www.va.gov>
Financial Point: 888-243-7351
Education benefits:
888-GIBILL 1 (888-442-4551)
<http://benefits.va.gov/gibill>
Survivor's benefits: 800-827-1000
http://www.va.gov/opa/persona/dependent_survivor.asp



Air Force Survivor Benefits

Air Force Casualty
800-433-0048
<http://www.retirees.af.mil/sbp>

Coast Guard Survivor Benefits

202-795-6647
<http://www.uscg.mil/psc/psd/fs/casualty.asp>

States

Some states provide benefits and support to survivors, especially to survivors of National Guard or reserve members killed on active duty. Amounts and benefits may vary.

Veterans Health Administration

877-222-8387
<http://www1.va.gov/health>
Bereavement counseling: 202-461-6530 or email
vetcen.bereavement@va.gov
http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/Bereavement_Counseling.asp

National Cemetery Administration

800-827-1000
<http://www.cem.va.gov>
National Cemetery Scheduling Office:
800-535-1117
Memorial Programs Service: 800-697-6947
Presidential Memorial Certificate
Program: 202-565-4964
Headstones and markers: 800-697-6947

Other resources

Arlington National Cemetery

877-907-8585

<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil>

If you wish to have your loved one buried or interred at Arlington National Cemetery, ask your local funeral home to telephone the interment office and arrange for the interment service. This should be done while you are, or your representative is, in the funeral home.

Armed Forces Services Corporation

888-237-2872

<http://www.afsc.com>

On behalf of the Department of Defense, AFSC provides the following for each family of an active-duty fallen service member (including Reserve Component members on active duty):

- A survivor benefit report with the lifetime integrated stream of benefits for the family (including Social Security benefits, VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Survivor Benefit Plan, Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance and the VA Dependents' Educational Assistance)
- An interactive online survivor benefits report (see Money Matters on [Page 11](#) for more information)
- Support in understanding the benefits through their Family Assistance Survivor Team (877-827-2471)

Defense Finance and Accounting Service

800-321-1080

<http://www.dfas.mil>

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service provides professional finance and accounting services for members of the uniformed services and their dependents. Here you will find a wealth of information about military pay and benefits. Look under Retired Pay for information on survivor benefits.



Gold Star Advocates

U.S. Army

Installation Management Command G-9, Family Programs Directorate
210-466-1173

Email: usarmy.jbsa.imcom-hq.mbx.sos-survivor-advocate@mail.mil

U.S. Marine Corps

Long Term Assistance Program Office
703-784-9580

Email: Gold.Star.Advocate@usmc.mil

U.S. Navy

Long Term Assistance Program Office
901-874-0083

Email: MILL_LTAP@navy.mil

U.S. Air Force

USAF/A1SAA, Airman and Family Care Division
703-697-2392

Email: usaf.pentagon.af-a1.mbx.af-alsaa@mail.mil

U.S. Coast Guard

Coast Guard Casualty Matters Office
202-795-6647

The National Defense Authorization Act 2014, Section 633, requires each secretary of a military department to designate a specific member to assist spouses and other dependents of service members, including Reserve Component, who die on active duty.

These survivor advocates 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. If you are a survivor and not satisfied with the casualty assistance provided by your service, contact your Gold Star Advocate. They are there to help, regardless of how and where your loved one died.

If you are not satisfied with the casualty assistance provided by your service advocate, you may contact the Department of Defense's Gold Star Advocate program manager:

Department of Defense

Casualty and Mortuary Affairs and Military Funeral Honors
571-372-5319

Email: osd.pentagon.rsrcmgmt.list.ousd-p-r-gold-star-advocate-mbx@mail.mil

Gold Star Mothers Inc.

202-265-0991

<http://www.goldstarmoms.com>

Gold Star Mothers is a congressionally chartered nonprofit organization. This is an organization of mothers who lost a son or daughter in the service of our country.

Gold Star Wives of America Inc.

888-751-6350

<http://www.goldstarwives.org>

Gold Star Wives is a congressionally chartered nonprofit service organization. This group provides services to active-duty and service-connected military widows and widowers.

Military Funeral Honors

<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh>

Families of eligible veterans may request funeral honors through their funeral director. The funeral director must contact the appropriate military service to arrange for the funeral honors detail.

National Archives Veterans Service Records

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records>

Through the National Archives, next of kin survivors may request free copies of the service member's service record by submitting an online request or mailing or faxing a Standard Form 180, "Request Pertaining to Military Records."

National Association for Uniformed Services

800-842-3451

<http://www.naus.org>

The National Association for Uniformed Services is the only military affiliated association whose membership is open to the entire military/veteran family — Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, United States Public Health Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Guard and reserve. The NAUS serves all ranks and grades, represents a broad spectrum of interests and is affiliated with the Society of Military Widows (see below), supporting the interests and needs of spouses and survivors.

National Military Family Association

800-260-0218

<http://militaryfamily.org>

The goal of the NMFA is to educate military families about the rights, benefits and services available to them and to promote and protect the interests of military families by influencing the development and implementation of legislation and policies affecting them.

Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance

800-419-1473

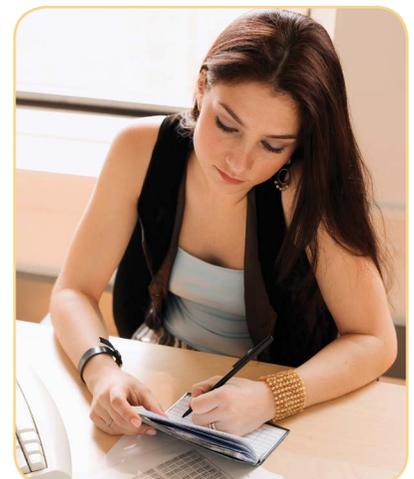
Main fax: 800-236-6142

Claims fax: 877-832-4943

<http://benefits.va.gov/insurance/sgli.asp>

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance is a program of low-cost group life insurance available to all members of the uniformed services.

Service members are automatically insured under SGLI unless the service member chooses to reduce the amount or cancel it entirely.



Operation Homefront

800-722-6098

<http://www.operationhomefront.net>

Operation Homefront provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of our service members and wounded warriors.

Sesame Workshop: Talk, Listen, Connect Initiative

http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/topics/grief_bridge

“When Families Grieve” is a continuation of Sesame Workshop’s award-winning Talk, Listen, Connect initiative providing resources and emotional support to military families with young children coping with challenging transitions in their lives. The When Families Grieve initiative provides resources in support of families with young children between the ages of 2 and 8 who are coping with the death of a parent. Resource kits are available, at no cost, through Military OneSource by calling 800-342-9647. Your casualty assistance officer can also arrange to have a kit forwarded to you upon request.

Social Security Administration

800-772-1213

Expedited Claim Unit: 866-777-7887

<https://www.ssa.gov>

Social Security benefits may be available to the spouse or children of deceased service members. Your casualty assistance officer can help you with this.

Society of Military Widows

800-842-3451, ext. 1011 or 1003

<http://militarywidows.org>

The Society of Military Widows is a nonprofit organization that serves the interests of women whose husbands died while on active military duty, of service-connected illness or during disability or regular retirement from the military services.

Survivor Outreach Services

855-707-2769

<http://www.sos.army.mil>

The Army made a commitment to provide long-term support to survivors of the fallen through the development of the Survivor Outreach Services program. This program provides survivors with access to dedicated and comprehensive support services such as support groups, life-skills education, benefits milestone management, advocacy and resource information. Financial assistance is also available for long-term financial goals, budget counseling, debt management, estate planning, tax issues and higher education needs. Survivor Outreach Services helps continue the survivor’s connection with the Army family and provides services for as long as the survivor desires.

The USO

302-423-6368

<https://www.uso.org/programs/support-for-families-of-the-fallen>

The USO Families of the Fallen Support Program provides travel support, respite and comfort to families who are traveling through airports across the United States. The USO works with airline and airport security officials to expedite the check-in process for families of the fallen traveling to Dover Air Force Base, connects family members arriving from multiple locations and arranges for accommodations if a family's flight is missed or delayed, coordinates with each military branch to link families with ground transportation to and from Dover Air Force Base, supports military escorts who accompany their fallen comrades to their final homecoming and assists families traveling to and from memorial services when requested. The USO funds and provides continued support and comfort through partnership with best-in-class organizations to help families cope with their grief and move forward with their lives, including the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Good Grief Camps for children and memory boxes with comprehensive resources for kids who have lost a parent to help them and their families cope with the loss.

Thrift Savings Plan

877-968-3778

<https://www.tsp.gov>

The Thrift Savings Plan is a defined contribution plan and offers the same savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under 401K plans. The TSP benefits are passed to designated beneficiaries via the member's completed TSP-U-3. If no TSP-U-3 was completed, the benefits will be passed according to the order of precedence required by law.

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

800-959-TAPS (8277)

<http://www.taps.org>

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors is a 24/7 tragedy assistance resource for anyone who has suffered the loss of a military loved one, regardless of the relationship to the deceased or the circumstance of the death. The program provides comfort and care through comprehensive services and programs including peer-based emotional support, case work assistance, connections to community-based care and grief and trauma resources.

Trevor Romain Memory Box Grief Comfort Kit

<http://www.trevorromain.com>

The Trevor Romain Comfort Kit for Kids is centered on the Parents' Choice Gold Award-winning DVD, "What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?" The DVD uses gentle humor, original music and a compassionate storyline to pass along practical and helpful advice for kids. Despite the serious subject matter, kids of all ages are enlightened and encouraged as Trevor's characters learn how to move toward grief instead of running away from it.

The kit includes the following:

- "What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?" (DVD)
- "What On Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?" (book)
- A journal for self-expression with original artwork and writing prompts
- Coco, a plush animal offering comfort and companionship

- “Helping Children Cope With Loss” (booklet for caregivers)
- A letter from Coco and a set of colored pencils
- A special memory box to protect treasured keepsakes

The Comfort Kits are available free of charge from Military OneSource by calling 800-342-9647.

TRICARE

North region: 877-874-2273

West region: 877-988-9378

South region: 800-444-5445

<http://www.tricare.mil>

To understand your health care benefits you may ask your casualty assistance officer or contact TRICARE for more information.

Veterans' Employment and Training Service

877-872-5627

<http://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/service-locator.aspx>

Using an integrated approach to serving veterans, spouses and widows, VETS coordinates with Department of Labor agencies and partners with other federal agencies, veterans' service organizations and employers that support veterans' employment programs. The American Job Centers provides all job seekers with a full range of assistance, including job search assistance, resume assistance, labor market information, career counseling, job referral and referral to other supportive and training resources.

VIII. List of Important Documents

- DD Form 1300 “Report of Casualty” (provided by your service casualty office)
- DD Form 2064 “Certificate of Death (Overseas)”
- Civilian death certificates (can be purchased through funeral home; 12 copies recommended)
- Marriage certificate
- Divorce decree
- Birth certificate
- 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 safe-deposit boxes
- References to outstanding debt
- Vehicle title and registration

IX. Consolidated Phone Listings of Survivor Support Organizations

Air Force Casualty/Survivor Benefits

800-433-0048

Air Force Families Forever

866-299-0596

Arlington National Cemetery

877-907-8585

Armed Forces Services Corporation

888-237-2872

Army Casualty/Survivor Benefits

800-325-4988

Coast Guard Casualty

202-795-6647

Coast Guard Survivor Benefits

800-772-8724

**Defense Enrollment Eligibility
Reporting System**

800-538-9552

**Defense Finance and
Accounting Service**

800-321-1080

Gold Star Mothers Inc.

202-265-0991

Gold Star Wives of America Inc.

888-751-6350

Marine Corps Casualty/Survivor Benefits

800-847-1597

**Marine Corps Long Term
Assistance Program**

866-210-3421

Military OneSource

800-342-9647

Overseas: 800-342-9647 or 703-253-7599

**National Association for
Uniformed Services**

800-842-3451

National Military Family Association

800-260-0218

Navy Casualty/Survivor Benefits

800-368-3202

Navy Gold Star Program

888-509-8759

**Office of Servicemembers' Group
Life Insurance**

800-419-1473

Main Fax: 800-236-6142

Claims Fax: 877-832-4943

Operation Homefront

800-722-6098

Social Security Administration

866-777-7887

Society of Military Widows

800-342-3451, ext. 1011 or 1003

Survivor Outreach Services

855-707-2769

Thrift Savings Plan

877-968-3778

**Tragedy Assistance Program
for Survivors**
800-959-TAPS (8277)

TRICARE

North region: 877-874-2273
West region: 877-988-9378
South region: 800-444-5445

**United States Citizenship and
Immigration Services**
877-247-4645

**Veterans' Employment and
Training Service**
877-872-5627

Department of Veterans Affairs

Bereavement Counseling
202-461-6530

Education Benefits
888-GIBILL-1 (888-442-4551)

Financial Point
888-243-7351

Headstones and Markers
800-697-6947

Memorial Programs Service
800-697-6947

Montgomery GI Bill/VEAP Refund
888-GIBILL-1 (888-442-4551)

National Cemetery Administration
800-827-1000

Presidential Memorial Certificate
202-565-4964

Survivor's Benefits
800-827-1000

Veterans Benefits Administration
800-827-1000
TDD Line: 800-829-4833

Veterans Health Administration
877-222-8387