

Standard Operating Procedure

Casualty Assistance Program

TXSG SOP 1510.10

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Texas State Guard (TXSG)

PO Box 5218

Austin, TX 78763

OPR: Texas State Guard Chaplain



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Commanding

Summary. This SOP provides guidance for Officers and Chaplains in the TXSG to administer the Casualty Assistance Program.

Applicability. This SOP applies to all components of TXSG.

Management Control Process. NA.

Proponent and Exception Authority. The proponent for this SOP is the Chaplain, Texas State Guard. The proponent has the authority to approve exceptions to this SOP that are consistent with controlling law and regulation.

Supplementation. Supplementation of this SOP or establishment of command and local forms on Casualty Notification is prohibited without prior approval from the Commanding General (TXSG), through the Chaplain, Texas State Guard P.O. Box 5218, Austin, TX 78763-5218.

Suggested Improvements. Users are invited to send comments and suggested improvements concerning this SOP directly to the Chaplain of the Texas State Guard P.O. Box 5218, Austin, TX 78763-5218.

Distribution. A

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

General Purpose, 1.1, *page 3*

References, 1.2, *page 3*

Explanation of Abbreviations and Terms, 1.3, *page 3*

Responsibilities, 1.4, *page 3*

Chapter 2

Casualty Assistance

Objectives of the Program, 2.1 *page 4*

Persons entitled to a casualty assistance officer, 2.2 *page 4*

Selection of casualty assistance officer, 2.3 *page 4*

Casualty assistance center responsibilities for selection, certification, and appointment of the casualty assistance officer, 2.4 *page 5*

Casualty assistance officer training and certification, 2.5 *page 5*

Casualty assistance officer packets, 2.6 *page 6*

Continuity of casualty assistance officer activities, 2.7 *page 6*

Execution of the casualty assistance mission, 2.8 *page 6*

Casualty assistance report, 2.9 *page 8*

Assisting next of kin of deceased retired soldiers 2.10 *page 8*

Release from casualty assistance duties 2.11 *page 8*

Disposition of documentation 2.12 *page 8*

Posthumous awards and decorations 2.13 *page 8*

Appendix A

References, *page 12*

Table List

Figure List

Figure 2-1: Phone Directory, *page 10*

Glossary of terms / Acronyms, *page 13*

Chapter 1

1. General

1.1. Purpose

- 1.1.1. To establish a standard operating procedure (SOP) when TXSG casualties are sustained. A casualty is defined as any person who is lost to the organization by having been declared dead.
- 1.1.2. To describe Casualty Assistance for all TXSG service members. This Casualty Assistance would also be given, to the extent feasible, to next of kin (NOK) to assist with the logistics of honors and providing chaplain support.
- 1.1.3. To ensure Commanders communicate to Soldiers and Civilian employees that they do not release any information concerning a casualty until after the initial notification has been completed.

1.2. References See Appendix A. *page 14*

1.3. Explanation of Abbreviations and Terms See Glossary.

1.4. Responsibilities

- 1.4.1.1. The Commanding General of the TXSG (CG, TXSG). Serves as the senior official on matters concerning exceptions to this SOP.
- 1.4.1.2. The TXSG Chief of Staff will provide a briefing to the Casualty Notification Officer.
 - 1.4.1.2.1. Provides guidance and policy clarification.
 - 1.4.1.2.2. Primary Point of Contact for Casualty Notification to the TXSG CG's Office.
- 1.4.1.3. The TXSG Chaplain. Serves as the senior TXSG policy official for all Chaplaincy readiness of the TXSG.
 - 1.4.1.3.1. Provides oversight, support and direction to all components of the TXSG with a direct report to TXSG Headquarters.
 - 1.4.1.3.2. Provides policy oversight and guidance to standards.

Chapter 2

2. Casualty Assistance Program

2.1. Objectives of the program

- 2.1.1. Assist with coordinating funeral honors.
- 2.1.2. Assist the NOK receiving benefits or entitlements during the period immediately following a casualty
- 2.1.3. Assist Primary Next of Kin PNOK in other personal affairs
- 2.1.4. Assist in keeping NOK informed of ongoing investigations and assist with obtaining final copies of investigation reports.

2.2. Person entitled to a casualty assistance officer.

2.2.1. The TXSG will appoint a Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO) to eligible NOK and beneficiaries of the following categories:

- 2.2.1.1. All currently serving TXSG Service Members
- 2.2.1.2. TXSG service members retired from federal or National Guard service when not covered by Federal assistance.
- 2.2.1.3. Current and former TXSG General Officers and Sergeants Major

2.3. **Selection of casualty assistance officer** - Whenever requests submitted for Casualty Assistance, Commanders (CDRs) are responsible for the quality of candidates nominated for CAO training and certification. The CAO represents the Governor. He or she must be a currently trained and certified CAO, and will be emotionally mature, courteous, helpful, and compassionate toward the NOK and will reflect the Army's concern for its personnel and their Families while performing this sensitive mission. The CAO will be prepared to cope with any of the wide range of emotions notification might elicit.

- 2.3.1. Only trained and certified CAOs/CNO's can be tasked to notify NOK of fallen service member. All CAOs/CNO's must:
 - 2.3.1.1. Be knowledgeable, competent, dependable, and sympathetic.
 - 2.3.1.2. Be mature Soldiers in the rank of O2 and above and E5 and above.
 - 2.3.1.3. Accept casualty assistance as their primary duty.
- 2.3.2. The rank of the CAO should be equal to or higher than the rank of the casualty.
- 2.3.3. Upon appointment as a CAO, CDRs will release service members from conflicting duties and requirements so they can give the NOK all necessary assistance. CAO/CNO duties will take precedence over all other assigned duties.
- 2.3.4. Do not use the following personnel as CAOs:
 - 2.3.4.1. Personnel assigned to recruiting.
 - 2.3.4.2. Inspectors General.
 - 2.3.4.3. Chaplains
 - 2.3.4.4. CDRs for Soldiers under their command.
 - 2.3.4.5. Officers of the Judge Advocate General Corps
 - 2.3.4.6. A close personal friend or relative of the deceased or the Family.
 - 2.3.4.7. The Casualty Notification Officer (CNO).

2.4. Brigade Commander (BDE CDR) is ultimately responsible for selection, certification, and appointment of the casualty assistance officer in their Brigade area.

- 2.4.1. The BDE CDR will maintain a roster of trained and certified CAOs residing within their geography. The roster with name, rank, and contact information will be updated electronically using RMS. Subordinate units must assist BDE CDRs in maintaining these rosters by providing BDE CDRs with regular updates on their certified service members nonavailability due to deployment, reassignment, or other nonavailability circumstances.
- 2.4.2. The CAO should be able to communicate in the same language as the person receiving assistance. The TXSG CG may approve exceptions to qualifications. More than one CAO may be appointed when persons residing at different addresses require assistance. Detailed coordination in cases with multiple CAOs is extremely important.
- 2.4.3. Official appointment memorandums are required for Soldiers on CAO duty. This order protects the Soldier from being appointed or assigned to other duties during the time of assistance and authorizes him or her to incur certain expenses in the conduct of official duties.
- 2.4.4. Upon death of an Active TXSG general officer the TXSG CG will coordinate and appoint an another TXSG general officer as CAO. Exceptions to this policy may be granted only when it is not feasible to appoint a TXSG general officer. When assigning a TXSG general officer to be a CAO, the BC must also assign a CAO certified field-grade officer to be the assistant CAO.

2.5. Casualty assistance officer training and certification - The CAOs must be trained and certified prior to conducting a casualty assistance mission. Certification is obtained by attending standardized classroom training. Certification expires one (1) year after training. Yearly recertification and refresher training are required. The CAO training and certification must include the following areas:

- 2.5.1. Roles and responsibilities of the CAO.
- 2.5.2. An overview of benefits and forms preparation.
- 2.5.3. Assistance to those eligible to receive benefits or entitlements.
- 2.5.4. Preparation for common reactions to the grief and trauma of a loss.
Awareness of potential cultural differences and spiritual sensitivities.
- 2.5.5. Privacy Act as it applies to casualty assistance.
- 2.5.6. Public affairs matters relating to the TXSG Casualty Assistance Program.
- 2.5.7. Availability of various resources for survivors within Texas Military Department (TMD), other state agencies, and non-governmental entities.
- 2.5.8. General knowledge and understanding of the TXSG Casualty Assistance Program (CAP).

2.6. Casualty assistance officer packets (CAR materials and forms TBD pending T-Staff input)

- 2.6.1. CACs will prepare a standard resource packet to provide to the CAO at the initial briefing. Use of the packet will ensure consistency and appropriate standards among CAOs throughout the CAC's geography. It also promotes efficiency when the CAO meets with the NOK. The CAO packet will contain current forms required to complete the CAO's mission and up-to-date contact information for local government and private support organizations. Most of these materials are listed on the casualty assistance report (CAR)
- 2.6.2. These packets will include at a minimum the following:
 - 2.6.2.1. CAO guide. (TBD)
 - 2.6.2.2. Telephone numbers and email addresses of officials who can provide information on all aspects of the TXSG Casualty Assistance Program.
 - 2.6.2.3. A business card with contact numbers that are operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - 2.6.2.4. Up-to-date lists of resources and support organizations available that can provide services. (TBD)
 - 2.6.2.5. The list of service organizations will include a disclaimer that the TXSG does not endorse any particular organization over another.

2.7. Continuity of casualty assistance officer activities - The CAO must keep an activities log documenting all contact with family members, activities done on behalf of the family, expenses incurred in direct connection to casualty assistance duties, communication with any unresolved issues or tasks. The CAC will update the CAO activities log. The activities log may be used as the source document substantiating local travel claims

2.8. Execution of the casualty assistance mission - The TEOC appoints the CAO as the CG's representative to the NOK and ensures that the resources of the TMD are available to help the CAO carry out his or her duties, including but not limited to, office of the staff judge advocate, chaplain, provost marshal, director of emergency services, public affairs officer and finance. The CG charges the CAO to provide all reasonable assistance to the family in their time of need.

2.8.1. Unit CDRs will—

- 2.8.1.1. Release Soldiers on CAO duty from all conflicting duties and requirements.
- 2.8.1.2. Monitor the Soldier's performance as a CAO.
- 2.8.1.3. Comment on CAO duties performed in the Soldier's evaluation report.

2.8.2. The CAC directs and supervises the CAO's assistance mission and will ensure each CAO briefing checklist is annotated to reflect which benefits and entitlements apply to each case.

2.8.3. The CAO will be the focal point for all official communications with the family. The CAO will coordinate with all appropriate TMD resources

2.8.4. The quality of service must reflect attention to duty and to the NOK. It will lessen the emotional and financial strain born by the NOK. The CAO should pursue the assignment with a keen sense of urgency but conform to the

NOK's time preferences. The CAO should take pride in conduct, military appearance, and services rendered. Moreover, the CAO should keep the thoughts, feelings, and position of the NOK uppermost in mind.

2.8.5. The CAO will read and follow all of the guidance contained in the CAO guide that the CAC will provide. (TBD)

2.8.6. The CAO will assist the NOK on all matters pertaining to the deceased. The CAO will—

2.8.6.1. Make daily entries on the CAR to ensure that appropriate services are applied for by the NOK.

2.8.6.2. Communicate directly with the person making the initial notification to ensure that the first and subsequent contacts with the NOK are productive

2.8.6.3. Telephone the NOK within 4 hours (but not between 2200 and 0600) following initial notification to schedule an appointment. The NOK will expect the telephone call, so any delay will cause them needless anxiety. Timing of the first visit should be based on the desires of the NOK. Comply with any request to delay the first visit but make a log entry to record their preference.

2.8.6.4. Confirm the residence address and mailing address obtained by the CNO.

2.8.6.5. Annotate immediate financial and emotional needs or problems facing the NOK.

2.8.6.6.

2.8.6.7. Inform NOK of available civilian programs and services, as necessary

2.8.6.8. Assist in arranging for the funeral if desired by the NOK.

2.8.6.9. Immediately notify the CAC of any change of address the NOK makes or contemplates.

2.8.6.10. Schedule a family brief, when requested, for categories of investigations that require a briefing offer.

2.8.6.11. Monitor the status of the delivery of the Soldier's PE. The CAO will hand-deliver the Personal Effects (PE) to NOK

2.8.6.12. Assist parents who are Secondary Next of Kin (SNOK) with requests for any final reports or materials. The CAO will contact parents who are SNOK at least monthly until relieved from CAO duty.

2.9. Execution of the casualty assistance mission - The CAO will use the Casualty Assistance Report (CAR) (**Pending T-Staff Input**) as a working document to record and track the benefits and services provided to the NOK. The CAR provides a standardized list of all benefits and services available under the program. This ensures that all personnel involved in the casualty assistance process have access to the same information to determine which benefits and services are appropriate to the NOK. The signed CAR serves as the after-action report. It also provides information for aggregated reports on casualty benefits and services to the CG.

- 2.9.1. The CAO will record assistance activities performed for individuals living within a single residence on the same CAR. Separate CARs are used when the NOK reside in separate residences. Each CAO involved in a case will complete a separate CAR.
 - 2.9.2. The CAR will be updated as events occur.
 - 2.9.3. The CAR ensures continuity and coordination of casualty assistance if more than one CAO becomes involved in the case.
 - 2.9.4. When out briefing the Family, the CAO will request that the NOK verifies the contact information provided and sign the CAR, The CAR signed by the NOK is required for release from CAO duty.
- 2.10. **Release from casualty assistance duties** - When the NOK has applied for all applicable benefits and services, the CAO and the NOK will review the CAR. The NOK will sign the CAR, signifying agreement that the CAO provided the indicated assistance. The CAO will ensure that the NOK understands the availability of additional assistance and has contact information. The CAO will provide the signed CAR to the CAC. Prior to releasing the CAO, the final CAR must be signed by the NOK. The CAC will contact the NOK to verify they are satisfied.
- 2.11. **Disposition of documentation** - After verifying the NOK's satisfaction with casualty assistance, the CAC will—
- 2.11.1. Notify the TEOC that the CAO has been released from duty; update CAO data field in and upload the signed CAR into case record.
 - 2.11.2. Upload any/all additional case-related documents.
- 2.12. **Posthumous awards and decorations** - Soldiers may be eligible and recommended for posthumously awarded decorations and badges. Refer to T1 for detailed information concerning eligibility, preparation of award elements (orders, certificates and medals), and presentation of awards to NOK, and special provisions during periods of service.
- 2.12.1. Role of the casualty assistance officer. The CAO should never indicate to the NOK that a specific level of award has been recommended, only that the Soldier is being considered. If the CAO receives official notification that a decoration has been approved, the CAO should contact the CAC or CDR to determine if a formal ceremony is authorized.

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Appendix A – References

1. US Army Regulation (AR) 638-8 Army Casualty Program
2. Department of the Army Pamphlet (DAPAM) 638-8 Procedures for Army Casualty Program

Glossary

ARC	American Red Cross
CAO	Casualty Assistance Officer
CAR	Casualty Assistance Report
CAS	Casualty Assistance
CDR	Commander
CG	Commanding General of the Texas State Guard
CMD	Command
CNO	Casualty Notification Officer
NA	Not Applicable
NOK	Next of Kin
PNOK	Primary Next of Kin
SAD	State Active Duty
SNOK	Secondary Next of Kin
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TDY	Temporary Duty
TMD	Texas Military Department
TXSG	Texas State Guard