



CAPSTONE 26-3

MAY 2026

Caring for the Families of America's Fallen Heroes

3101 Wilson Blvd Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22201

202.588.TAPS (8277)
TAPS.org

ALASKA GUARD CRASH – ‘64

Valdez honors Alaska Guardsmen killed in plane crash after 1964 earthquake

✍ Author: [Mark Thiessen, Associated Press](#) ⓘ Updated: June 23, 2018 📅 Published June 23, 2018

A month after the second most powerful earthquake ever was recorded, the Alaska port community of Valdez remained in ruins.

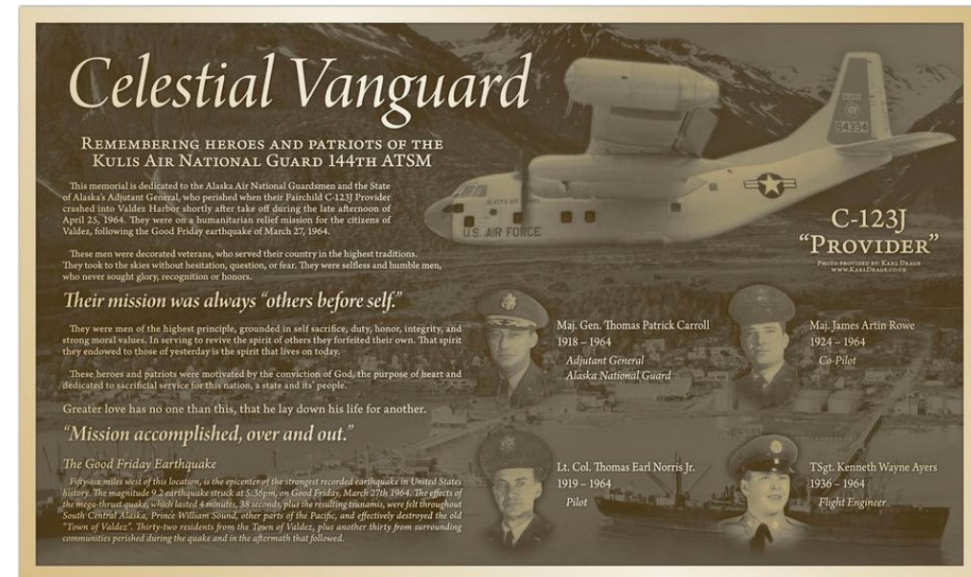


Maj. Gen. Thomas P. Carroll (Photo courtesy Alaska National Guard via AP)

A hulking Alaska National Guard cargo plane's mission April 25, 1964, was to deliver Gov. William Egan to oversee efforts to rebuild the town on a new site after the magnitude 9.2 earthquake.

After dropping off Egan and surveyors, the twin-engine Fairchild C-123J Provider took off in a heavy snowstorm to return to Anchorage carrying the Guard's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Thomas P. Carroll, and three others.

Three minutes later and about a mile due west of where more than 30 people died when the earthquake ripped apart the city dock, the plane struck the water head-on, at full speed, killing all on board. Despite rescue efforts, it quickly sank to the bottom of Prince William Sound.



Celestial Vanguard

REMEMBERING HEROES AND PATRIOTS OF THE
KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD 144TH ATSM

This memorial is dedicated to the Alaska Air National Guardsmen and the State of Alaska's Adjutant General, who perished when their Fairchild C-123J Provider crashed into Valdez Harbor shortly after take off during the late afternoon of April 25, 1964. They were on a humanitarian relief mission for the citizens of Valdez, following the Good Friday earthquake of March 27, 1964.

These men were decorated veterans, who served their country in the highest traditions. They took to the skies without hesitation, question, or fear. They were selfless and humble men, who never sought glory, recognition or honors.

Their mission was always "others before self."

They were men of the highest principle, grounded in self sacrifice, duty, honor, integrity, and strong moral values. In serving to revive the spirit of others they forfeited their own. That spirit they endowed to those of yesterday is the spirit that lives on today.

These heroes and patriots were motivated by the conviction of God, the purpose of heart and dedicated to sacrificial service for this nation, a state and its' people.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for another.

"Mission accomplished, over and out."

The Good Friday Earthquake

Fifty-one miles west of this location, is the epicenter of the strongest recorded earthquake in United States history. The magnitude 9.2 earthquake struck at 5:36pm, on Good Friday, March 27th 1964. The effects of the huge thrust quake which lasted 4 minutes, 38 seconds plus the resulting tsunamis, were felt throughout South Central Alaska, Prince William Sound, other parts of the Pacific, and effectively destroyed the old "Town of Valdez". Thirty-two residents from the Town of Valdez, plus another thirty from surrounding communities perished during the quake and in the aftermath that followed.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Patrick Carroll
1918 - 1964
Adjutant General
Alaska National Guard

Maj. James Artin Rowe
1924 - 1964
Co-Pilot

Lt. Col. Thomas Earl Norris Jr.
1919 - 1964
Pilot

TSgt. Kenneth Wayne Ayers
1936 - 1964
Flight Engineer



SURVIVING SPOUSE OF ARMY BG TOM CARROLL

8, Including General, Killed in Plane Crash

Published: November 13, 1992

JUNEAU, Alaska -- The commanding general of the Alaska Army National Guard and seven other Guardsmen were killed Thursday when their plane crashed while trying to land in bad weather.

The twin-engine Beechcraft C-125 was on final approach about 9 a.m. local time (1 p.m. EST) in snow and rain when it vanished from radar screens.

The plane was spotted in the Chilkat Mountains about five hours later. The fuselage was intact and there was no fire, but officials said all eight people aboard were dead.

Darkness and bad weather prevented crews from recovering the bodies until Friday.

Among the victims was Brig. Gen. Thomas C. Carroll, 44, Anchorage, commanding general of the state's Army National Guard. Two colonels and a command sergeant major were also among the dead.

The party was reportedly on a routine inspection trip to a facility in Juneau from Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, about 500 miles to the northwest.

Carroll, a member of the national advisory board of the Salvation Army, was the son of Thomas P. Carroll, Alaska's first National Guard adjutant general, who was killed in a plane crash in 1964.



USAFR RETIREE



INSPIRED BY THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY
that united the world

A family of whales trapped beneath the ice
One unforgettable rescue

Drew Barrymore John Krasinski
BIG MIRACLE

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS AN ANIMATICS CONTENT / WORKING TITLE PRODUCTION A KEN KRAVITS FILM "BIG MIRACLE" KIRSTEN BELL, HERMOT MOURMNEY, TIM BLAKE NELSON, VINCESA SHAW, AND TED DANSON ***WITH CLIFF FRIELMAN, GREGORY SHAY, AND LUCY LARSEN CARA SILVERMAN AND "BIG MIRACLE" JOAN BAILEY AND JENNIFER LEA CHAZON, NEDRA BAYNARD, STUART BISSER, PAUL GREEN, PRODUCED BY STEVE GUN, MICHAEL SHARAD, TIM BEVAN, ERIC FELLNER, WRITTEN BY WOLFGANG THOMAS ROSE, DIRECTED BY JACK DANIEL AND MICHAEL DEWIL

COMING SOON
www.everybodyloveswhales.com

Drew Barrymore John Krasinski
BIG MIRACLE

[illegible]



TAPS Mission

TAPS is the national nonprofit organization providing compassionate care and comprehensive resources to *all those* grieving a death in the military or veteran community.



TAPS Vision

TAPS honors our military men and women
by caring for *all those* they loved and left behind.





TAPS VALUES

HONOR AND REMEMBRANCE: We cherish the life of our fallen heroes and celebrate military survivors as the living legacies of their loved ones' service and sacrifice.

EMPOWERMENT: We empower survivors with healthy coping tools, resources, and opportunities to connect in the comfort of their home, their community, their region, and the nation to grow with their grief.

CONNECTION: We connect all those grieving a military death 24/7 to a nationwide network of peer based emotional survivor support and critical casework assistance.

EDUCATION: We inform and educate using research-informed best practices in bereavement and trauma care for survivors and advocate on behalf of survivors with policy and legislative priorities.

CREATING COMMUNITY: We build community with survivors to provide comprehensive comfort, care, and resources where they live, when they need it, and in a manner comfortable for them.





"The work TAPS does can only be done by people who have walked this very difficult road and are now willing to take your hand and say, 'walk with me, you are not alone'."

- General John Shalikashvili, (Ret), U.S. Army
13th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



TAPS CORE SERVICES

Grief doesn't follow a timeline. TAPS provides 24/7 care, forever.

24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline

TAPS is the only national nonprofit organization ready with a 24/7 live-answer helpline staffed by trained professionals specializing in grief and trauma support.

Peer Based Emotional Support

As the national nonprofit organization providing comfort, care, compassion, and connections with resources, TAPS connects survivors living with grief and trauma with trained peers who share a similar experience of grief and loss, fostering connectedness and belonging.

Community Based Care

TAPS Community-Based Care creates a supportive network of local grief support groups and mental health professionals who offer compassionate assistance and services to grieving military survivors and families in their community.



Casework

TAPS Casework provides practical support to military survivors and families living with grief, helping them navigate administrative processes and access emergency and critical financial resources.





TAPS PROVIDES SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR ALL SURVIVORS REGARDLESS OF THE DUTY STATUS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ☒ ACTIVE DUTY | ☒ STATE ACTIVE DUTY | ☒ RETIRED TO INCLUDE
RETIRED FROM THE
GUARD AND RESERVE |
| ☒ TITLE 10 STATUS | ☒ NON-DUTY STATUS | ☒ MILITARY FAMILY
GRIEVING A CIVILIAN
FAMILY MEMBER LOSS |
| ☒ TITLE 32 STATUS | ☒ RESERVES | ☒ BATTLE BUDDY |
| ☒ ACTIVE GUARD RESERVE | ☒ VETERAN TO
INCLUDE VETERAN
OF THE GUARD
AND RESERVE | |
| ☒ TECHNICIAN | | |
| ☒ TRADITIONAL GUARD | | |





2024 TAPS NEW SURVIVORS BY BRANCH OF SERVICE

TAPS.org/Mission



43%
Army



20%
Navy



13%
Air Force



15%
**Marine
Corps**



1%
**Coast
Guard**



0%
**Space
Force**



4% **
**National
Guard**

8% Others: Contractor, Foreign Military, Military Dependent, Public Health Service, US Air Force Academy, US Military Academy, US Naval Academy, Government Civilians

*Does not include non-military; military dependent; contractors; and unknown at time of intake

**Dependent on official military records or survivor connection

***Air National Guard and Army National Guard



2025 NEW SURVIVORS

9,560

New Survivors Connected with TAPS in 2025

82% (7,807) of all new 2025 survivors **Adults**

17% (1,654) of all new 2025 survivors **Children** (under the age of 18)



2025 Average of 26 New Survivors Each Day

44% of survivors connected within the first year (365 days) of their loss

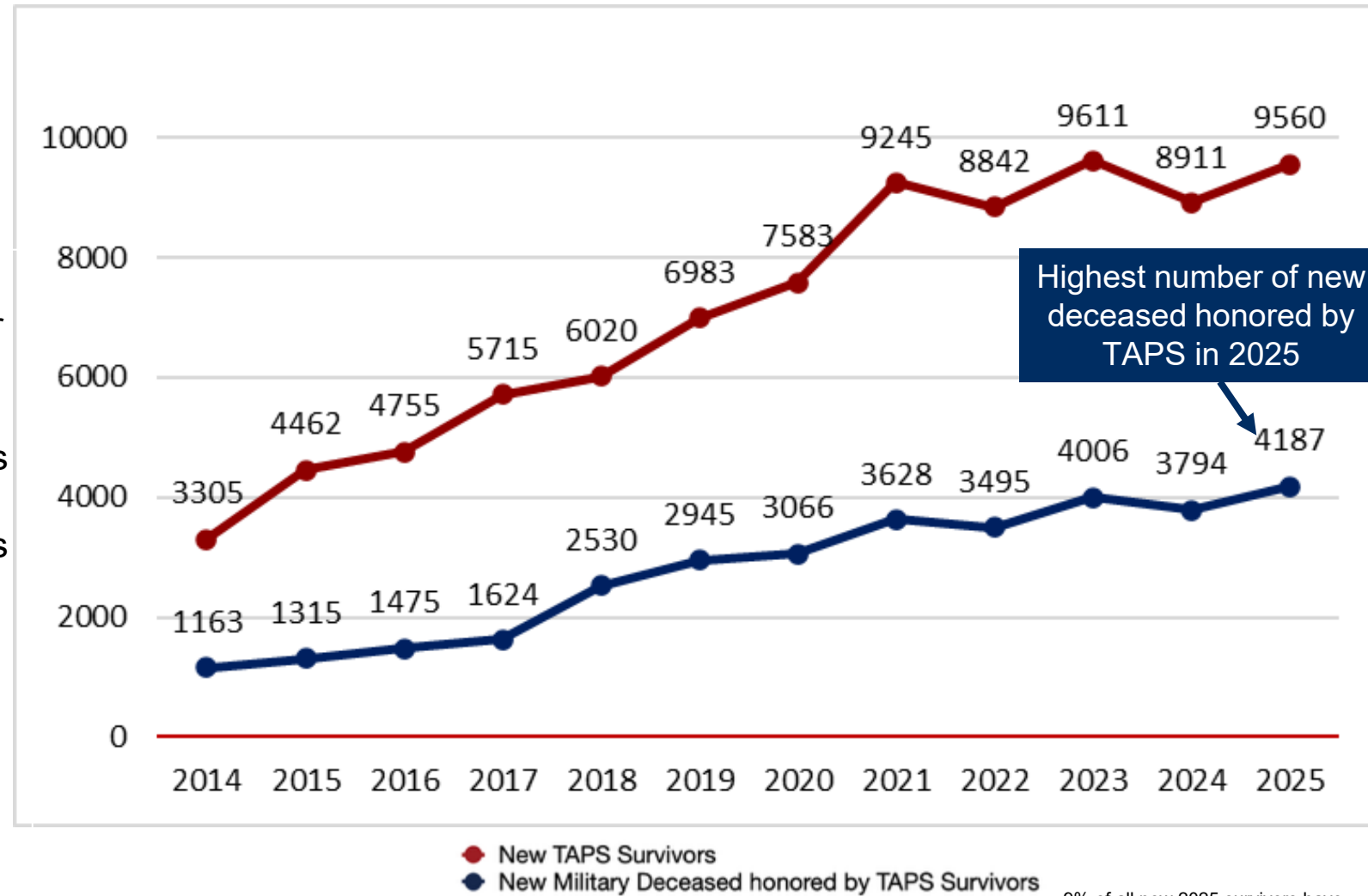
23% of survivors connected 1-3 years post-loss

10% of survivors connected 4-9 years post-loss

18% of survivors connected 10+ years post-loss

1 October 2025, TAPS projected welcoming 9,542 new survivors for the year. Closing out 2025, TAPS welcomed 18 more survivors than projected.

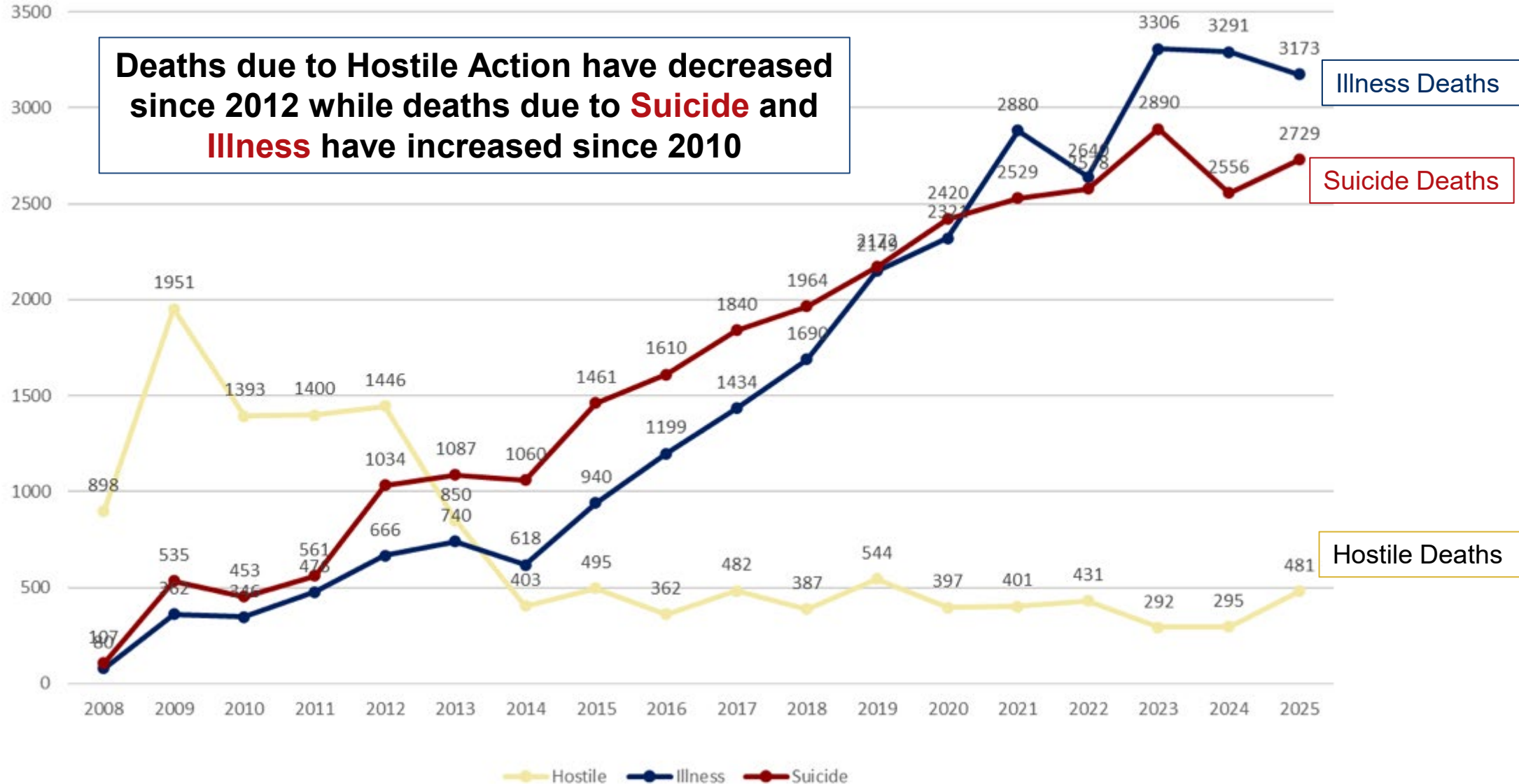
2025 New Survivors and Military Deceased Connecting with TAPS



9% of all new 2025 survivors have an unknown Date of Death

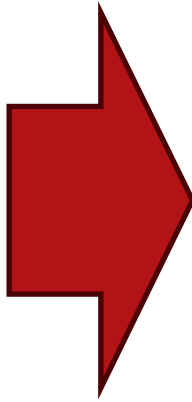


MILITARY AND VETERAN TRENDS IN CAUSE OF DEATH SINCE 2008





Military or Veteran
Service Member



TAPS Supports all Military and Veteran
Loved Ones



On average for every 1
deceased service
member, there are 10.5
significantly impacted
by the loss.^{3,4}



TAPS is the only national organization supporting **all**
military and veteran survivors across **all** duty status,
all relationships to the deceased, **all** manners of
death, and **all** branches of service

³Berman, A. L. (2011). Estimating the population of survivors of suicide: Seeking an evidence base. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 41(1), 110-116. doi:10.1111/j.1943-278x.2010.00009.x

⁴Cerel, J., McIntosh, J. L., Neimeyer, R. A., Maple, M., & Marshall, D. (2014). The continuum of "survivorship": Definitional issues in the aftermath of suicide. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 44(6), 591-600. doi:10.1111/sltb.12093



ALWAYS BY THEIR SIDE



If our survivors do nothing proactive, they still receive
432 Messages of Hope and Healing from TAPS Every Year



EVERY DAY:

365 TAPS Daily Reflection Email Messages

EVERY YEAR:

1 Angelversary Card Honoring the Anniversary of their Loved One's Death

2X A MONTH:

24 Email Invitations to Join a TAPS Care Group

EVERY MONTH:

12 Monthly TAPS Family Newsletters

ONGOING PEER CONNECTION:

24 Invitations to Connect With Other Survivors with a Similar: Manner of Death | Gender | Relationship to Loved One | Other Special Circumstances

WHEN NEW TO GRIEF:

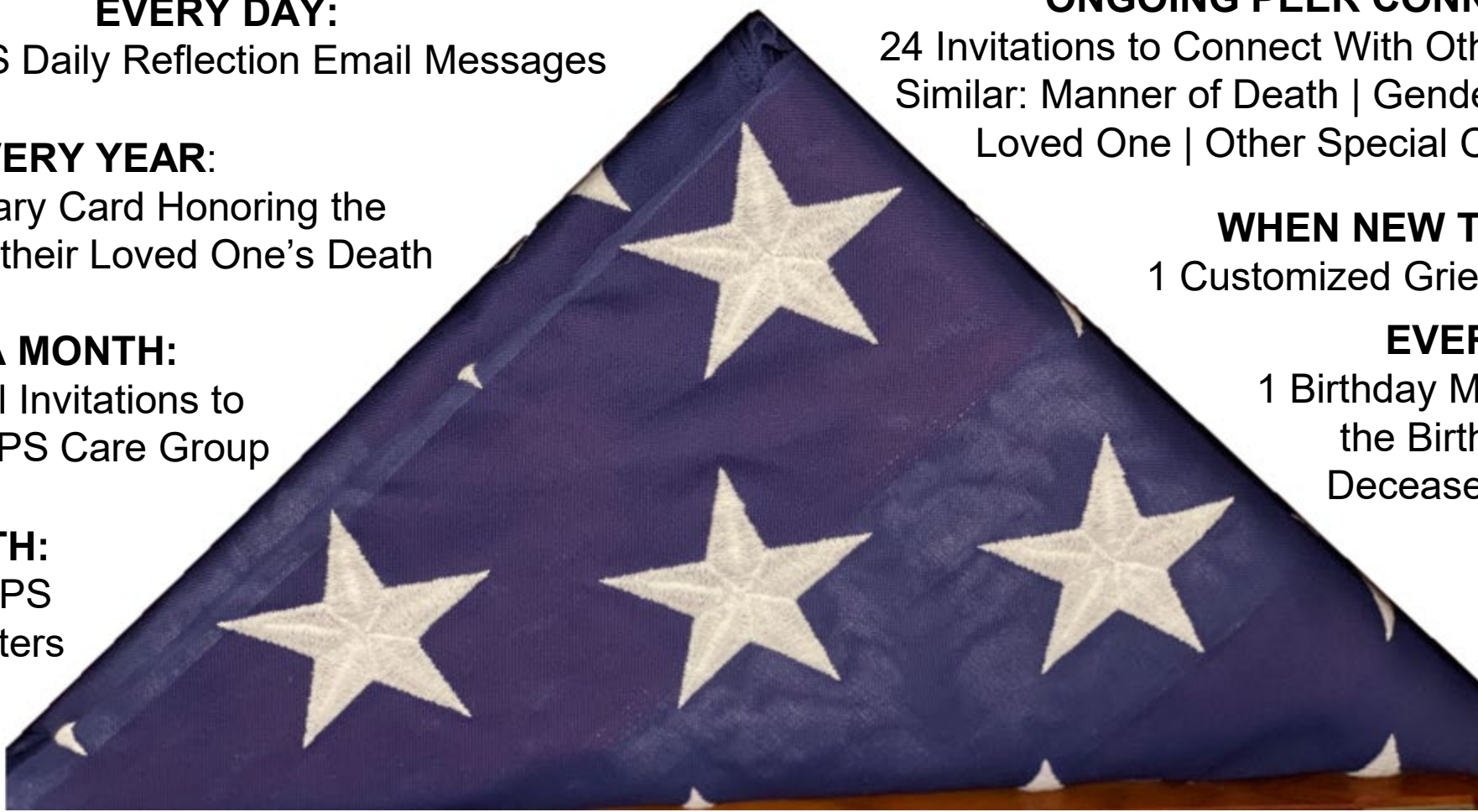
1 Customized Grief Resource Kit

EVERY YEAR:

1 Birthday Message Honoring the Birthday of Their Deceased Loved One

EVERY YEAR:

4 TAPS Quarterly Magazines



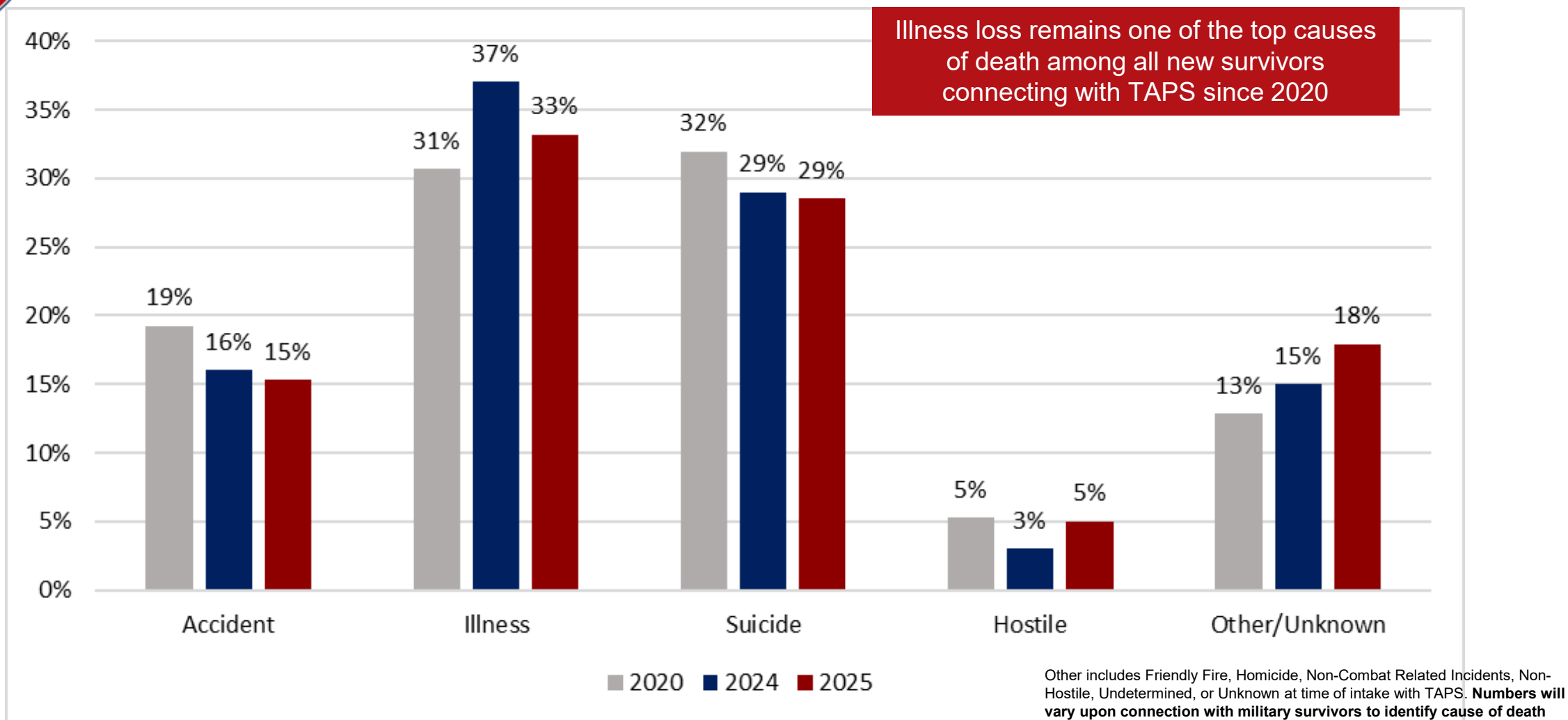


TRENDS IN MANNER OF DEATH



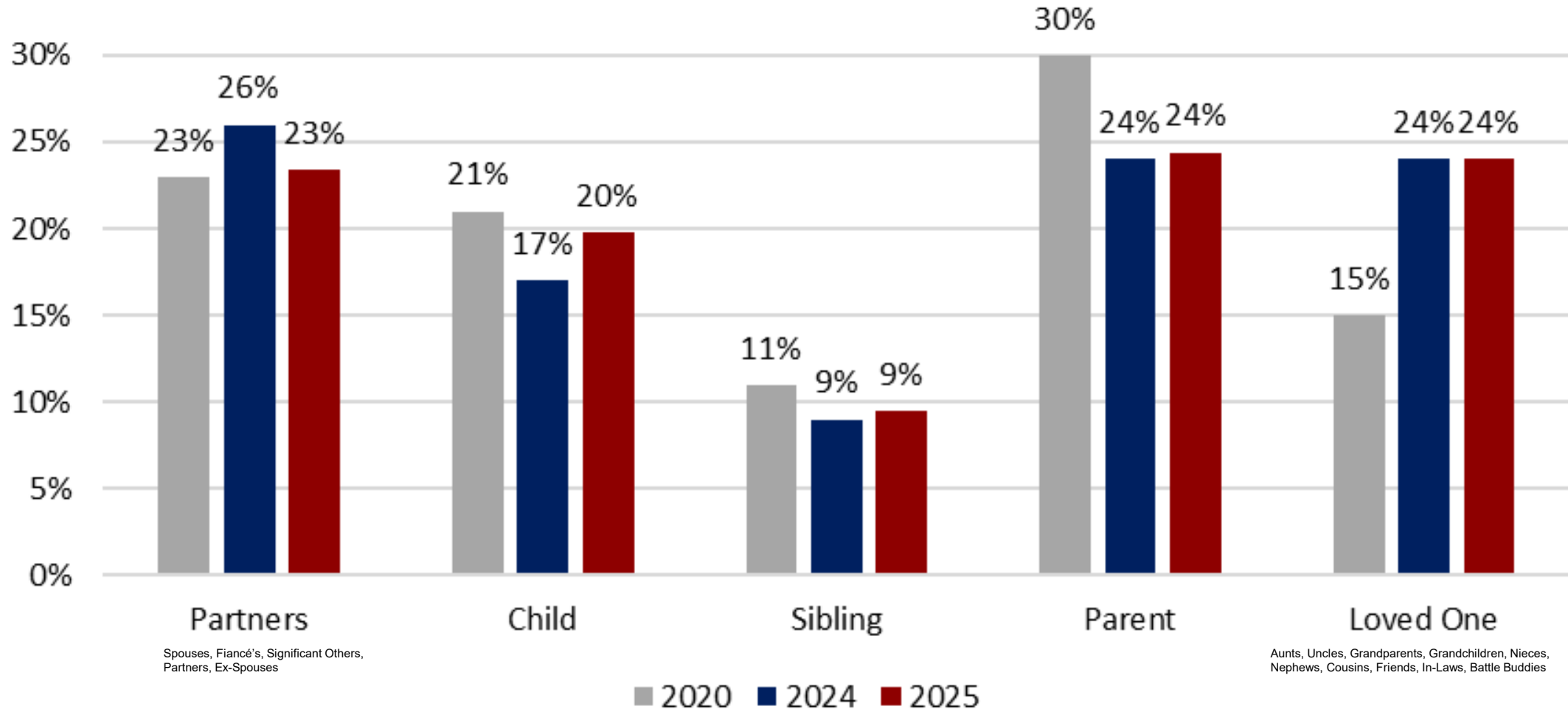


TRENDS IN MANNER OF DEATH





NEW SURVIVORS BY RELATIONSHIP TO THE DECEASED





TRENDS IN MANNER OF DEATH

★ Trends in deaths involving fentanyl

- ★ Pain
- ★ Opioids
- ★ Addiction
- ★ Street drugs
- ★ Fentanyl
- ★ **Loss of benefits to surviving family**

*“My son died on February 23, 2022, at his home in Fort Benning GA. He was in the process of transitioning out of the Army at the time of his death, but he was still Active Duty at the time of his death. Because he died at home and a drug overdose was suspected, I requested an autopsy thru the military, which was done. The results of his autopsy indicated **multiple drugs in his system at time of death - including fentanyl**. My son was a Staff Sergeant and a sniper instructor when he was assigned to Fort Benning, GA in late fall of 2019, with 10 years of very dedicated service to our country and two tours to Afghanistan. But he was diagnosed with PTSD, depression, insomnia, and the range of issues related to these unfortunate souls that were our so loved children.....”*



MEETING THE MISSION



SURVIVOR CARE TEAM

- ★ Frontline of survivor comfort, care, and support
- ★ Connecting survivors with professional peer support based on:
 - ★ Relationship to deceased
 - ★ Circumstances of death
 - ★ Manner of death
 - ★ Generation level

“When we lose someone we love, time ceases to exist. There’s only a before their death and an after their death. TAPS helps me to come to a place of peace between these times.”

– Survivor on Survivor Care Team





CASEWORK

**50%
increase
from 2024**



Survivor Support

Supporting survivors of a military death through the complexities after the loss of their military member

2025 - 9,790 Cases Resolved
2024 - 6,508 Cases Resolved
2023 - 5,763 Cases Resolved
2022 - 6,397 Cases Resolved

Official Papers | Employment
Headstone | Healthcare
Investigations | Line of Duty
Legal Cases | Medals
Personal Effects | Survivor Flags

**114%
increase
from 2024**



Financial Assistance

Providing emergency financial support in their greatest time of need

2025 - \$661K
2024 - \$309K
2023 - \$556K
2022 - \$372K

Groceries | Mortgage/Rent
Funeral Expenses
Post-Mortem Cleaning
Travel Costs | Moving Expenses
Clothing | School Supplies
Holiday Support | Tutoring



Retroactive Benefits

Retroactive benefits awarded to survivors with the support of TAPS Casework Assistance

2025 - \$7.9M
2024 - \$7.8M
2023 - \$5.7M
2022 - \$3.9M

DFAS (SBP, SSIA, AOP)
VA (DIC and Survivor Pension)
OSGLI (SGLI and SGLI-DE)



24/7 NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR HELPLINE

In 2025, TAPS answered the
most calls in our history

20,656

2022 - 2025 Averages

2022 # of incoming calls per day	37
2023 # of incoming calls per day	43
2024 # of incoming calls per day	50
2025 # of incoming calls per day	57

Casework, Emotional Support,
and TAPS Programming are the
main reasons military and
veteran survivors call the 24/7
TAPS Helpline



TAPS PROGRAMS

Survivor Seminars | Suicide Pre/Postvention | Caregiver to Survivor
Women's Empowerment | Sports & Entertainment | Outdoor Expeditions
Retreats | Care Groups | Young Adults | TAPS Togethers
Online Community | Virtual Programming





WHAT SURVIVORS GAIN

This weekend
I want to
establish peace
inside my own
soul/♥

Figure out what to do
with the rest of my
life.

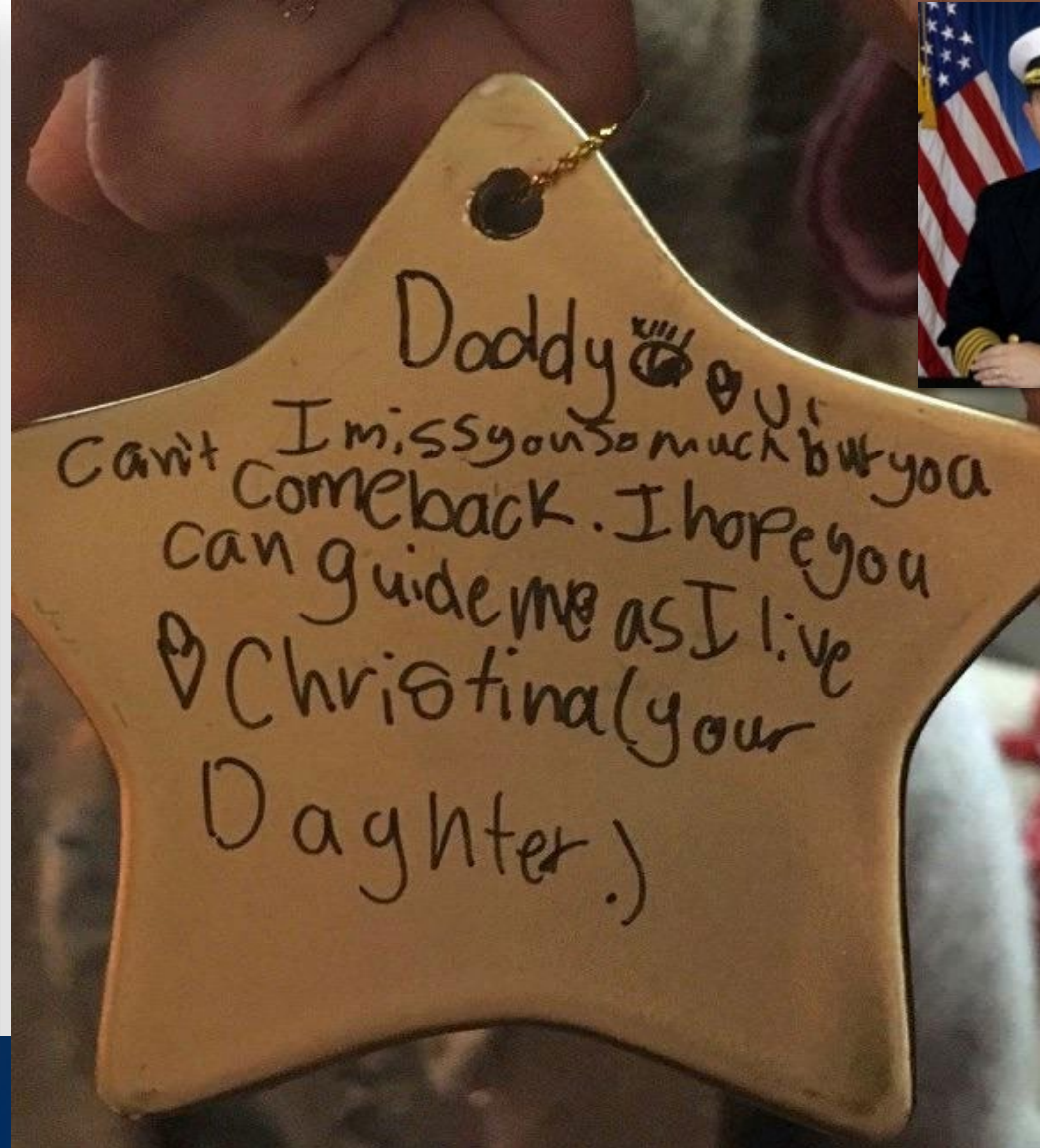
TO -
Start living
and stop
existing.
Amy

To reflect on the
anniversary of Cesar's
death the life that we
shared and who I am
now. To find a place of
peace with the two.

THEY served. THEY died.
THEIR stories
DO NOT END
#livinglegacy
www.taps.org



EMBRACING LIFE AS LIVING LEGACIES





TAPS SUPPORT TO YOUTH

Good Grief Camps | Family Campouts

Early Childhood | Young Adults | Online Support



GOOD GRIEF CAMP

"My boy has been coming for almost 10 years and the all-day events at Ft Myer were fantastic. He told me he felt this was the best Good Grief Camp he has attended. Also, the Group Leaders and Military Mentors were great as usually. Thank you!" – Surviving spouse

"TAPS has really been amazing for my daughter, by helping her establish friendships with other kids and adults that understand her loss. She doesn't feel quite as alone, even if every story is different, they all share a commonality in their grief, and I feel like the peer support is so important." - Surviving spouse





I want
survive with
out my mom

My dad is dead.



my dad past away and
TAPS have helped me
a lot



Sometime I think I will
be bullied at school.

I do not like my mom
to leave home alone

I hope he/bother is
good in school

I scared one day my
friends will leave
me one day.

I don't like planes
because I think it
will fall

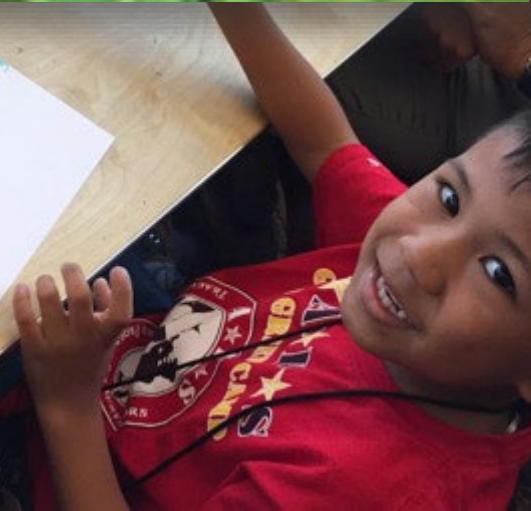
Hello dad I miss ~~that~~ ^{kiting} with you. Do you?
How are you doing? Do you miss me? How is
it up there? Would have been my dad if you hadn't
died? I am doing fine I have been sad since
you died Are you sad that you died too if you
hadn't died I wouldn't be in TAPS I am sad
and happy sad because you died. but happy
because I get to make new friends. Please send
me a balloon or a sign that you miss me ASK
God if you could spend one day with me even
if I can't see you. Sincerely,
M.



I miss you
so much
Dad

see you
in heaven
back

My Dad is in heaven eating
steaks and chicken wings
over me!!







BRINGING JOY TO MILITARY SURVIVORS

teams4taps | Stars4TAPS





ADVOCACY



CAPITOL HILL ADVOCACY

**NEARLY 150 SURVIVORS (ages 5 – 76) VISITED 300+ CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES
EDUCATING ON THE NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES OF AMERICA'S MILITARY SURVIVORS**

Key Accomplishments:

Partnered with 35 Fellow VSO's | Advocated for 4 Key Survivor Issues

**Met With 50 States (all currently seated senate offices) | Added 20 New Co-Sponsors Per Bill
350 Attendees to the TAPS Joint Congressional Reception with Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF)**





HOW WE GRIEVE



WHAT IS GRIEF?

- ★ A universal emotional response
- ★ A natural response to death and loss of a person we **love**
- ★ Separate from *depression* and *anxiety* and *trauma*



Risk Factors for Complicated Grief in the Military Community. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, First Published 20 May 2021. Grace E. Seamon-Lahiff, Chantel M. Dooley, Paul T. Bartone, Bonnie Carroll

Disenfranchised Grief in Gold Star Military Families. *Combat Stress*. Fall 2022. Paul T. Bartone, Ken Doka. Retrieved January 19, 2023, from <https://www.stress.org/disenfranchised-grief-in-gold-star-military-families>.



THE “TASKS” OF GRIEF

- ★ **The Four Tasks of Grief**
 - ★ Acknowledge the reality of the death
 - ★ Experience the pain of grief
 - ★ Adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing
 - ★ Form a new identity and reinvest energy *without forgetting the past*

Carroll, B. & Wolfelt, A. D. (2015). *Healing your grieving heart after a military death: 100 practical ideas for family and friends*. Companion Press.

Worden, J. W. (2018). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner*. Springer Publishing Company.

Dooley, C., Carroll, B., Fry, L., Seamon-Lahiff, G. (2019). *A model for supporting grief following traumatic loss: The tragedy assistance program for survivors (TAPS)*. Journal of Military Medicine (In press).





As **General Jimmy Doolittle** wrote after the death of his son serving in the Air Force,

“Only when someone very near and dear to one leaves does one appreciate the stark tragedy of death.

Even then, **nature tends to cushion the initial shock**, and the thought ‘**he is gone**’ does not carry the later realization of finality and permanence that comes only with the final indisputable understanding that ‘**we will never see him again**’.”





LIFE...AND DEATH.

HOW WE
WANT
GRIEF TO
WORK





LIFE...AND DEATH.

HOW WE
WANT
GRIEF TO
WORK



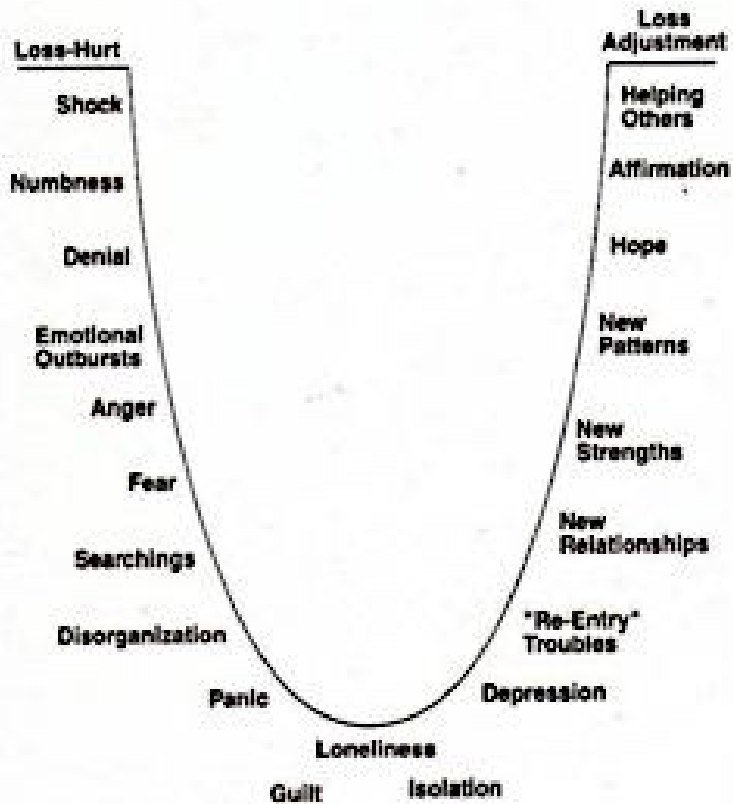
HOW GRIEF
ACTUALLY
WORKS





REALITY. IT'S WHERE WE LIVE

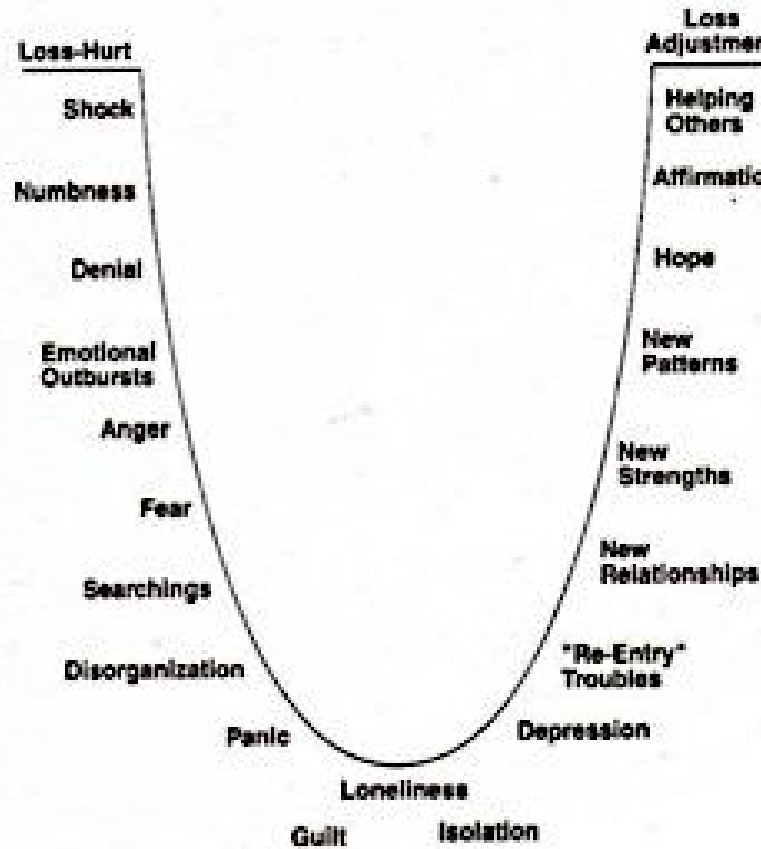
STAGES OF GRIEF



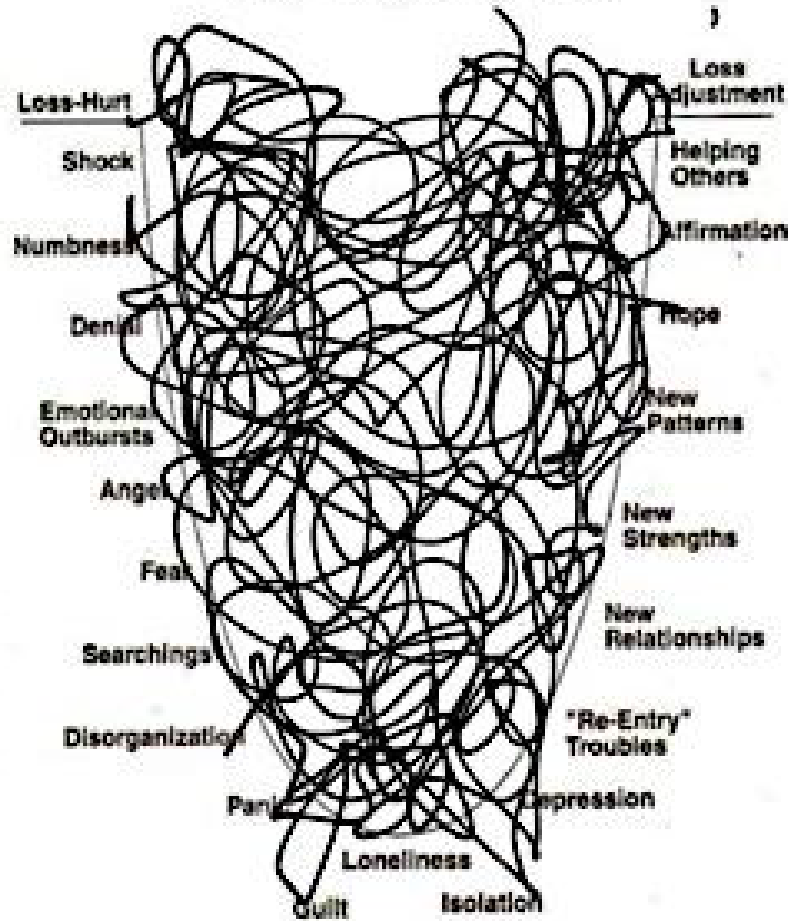


REALITY. IT'S WHERE WE LIVE

STAGES OF GRIEF



My experience





TAPS MODEL OF BEREAVEMENT



Safety & Stabilization

GOAL: Provide immediate care, comfort, and practical support to survivors.



Healthy Grief Journey

GOAL: Assist survivors in confronting and acknowledging their loss, addressing emotions of grief and establish a sense of hope for the future.



Meaning & Purpose

GOAL: Help survivor derive a sense of meaning from their loss and integrate positive life patterns while looking ahead to their future.



¹Dooley, C.M., Carroll, B., Fry, L.E., Seamon-Lahiff, G. & Bartone, P.T. (2019). A Model for Supporting Grief Recovery Following Traumatic Loss: The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). *Military Medicine*. doi:10.1093/milmed/usz084



TAPS PUBLICATIONS

MILITARY MEDICINE, 00, 00:1, 2019

A Model for Supporting Grief Recovery Following Traumatic Loss: The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

Chantel M. Dooley*; MAJ Bonnie Carroll, USAF R. (Ret)*; Laura E. Fry*; Grace Seamon-Lahiff, LMFT*; COL Paul T. Bartone, MS USA (Ret)†

While grief is a normal response to death and loss in human beings, some individuals experience severe and debilitating grief. Complicated grief was recognized in the 1990s as a prolonging of the normal grief process that impairs the mental and physical health of its sufferers. While there is some disagreement as to diagnostic criteria, it was included in DSM-5¹ as "persistent complex bereavement disorder." Prevalence estimates for complicated grief in the general population range from 2.4%² to 3.7%³ to 4.8%.⁴ Among the bereaved prevalence is higher, ranging from 10% to 40%.⁴⁻⁸

Those who experience the sudden death of a spouse or child are at higher risk for complicated grief, as are women in general.^{2,3} While the prevalence of complicated grief is higher in military personnel, clearly substantiated by high operational mortality rates, the period from personnel deployment to traumatic cause of death (14 years) and the period from death to bereavement care and support is often delayed.

While the prevalence of complicated grief is higher in military personnel, clearly substantiated by high operational mortality rates, the period from personnel deployment to traumatic cause of death (14 years) and the period from death to bereavement care and support is often delayed.

have been used successfully to assist military family members who experience the sudden death of a military member.

TAPS – the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors – was founded by Major Bonnie Carroll, whose husband was killed in a 1992 military plane crash along with 7 other servicemen. Following the crash, Carroll found meager support for survivors of a military death. Professional mental health providers she encountered seemed to have no understanding of the military and little real empathy for her situation of loss. Eventually, she found effective support among the other widows whose husbands died in the crash. It was this personal experience that convinced Carroll of the therapeutic value of peer support for grieving survivors, and the need for a dedicated support program for military survivors.

TAPS is a non-profit organization, and is funded by the Department of Defense. TAPS provides bereavement care and support to military survivors. TAPS has a national network of chapters that provide a variety of services. These tend to be time limited. Professional mental health providers are available in the military health system, but providers frequently lack understanding of the unique needs of military survivors. The TAPS organization provides expertise and the ability to coordinate care. Each military service has a TAPS chapter. TAPS is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Memorandum of Understanding) for the referral of survivors to TAPS.

Central to the TAPS approach is the use of volunteer peer support professionals, survivors who have experienced a military death in their own family and have received special training to

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/milmed/advance-article-abstract/doi/10.1093/milmed/0000000000000000 by guest on 24 April 2019



*Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, 3003 Wilson Blvd, 3rd Floor, Arlington, VA 22201.
†Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University.

Original Manuscript

Risk Factors for Complicated Grief in the Military Community

Grace E. Seamon-Lahiff¹, Chantel M. Dooley¹, Paul T. Bartone², and Bonnie Carroll¹

Abstract
Death, grief, research on deployment. However, as exist outside examine how war. The public community.

Keywords
complicated

Exploration into best practices in peer support for bereaved survivors

Paul T. Bartone¹, Jocelyn V. Bartone², Zaneta Gileno³, and John M. Violanti⁴

ABSTRACT
This exploratory, qualitative study addresses the question: what are the important elements in effective peer support programs for bereaved survivors? Interviews with 10 highly experienced experts were analyzed to identify recurrent themes and elements. Findings indicate that effective peer support programs for the bereaved should be: easily accessible; confidential; provide a safe environment; use peer supporters with similar shared experiences to clients; select peer supporters carefully; partner with professional mental health providers; train peer supporters thoroughly; and provide care and monitoring for peer supporters. These results can help inform efforts to improve peer support programs for bereaved survivors.

Introduction

Recent years have seen a rapid growth in peer support programs that aim to help people recover from a range of problems, including mental and physical illness, alcohol and drug addiction, and various disabilities (Repper & Carter, 2011; Sledge et al., 2011). A recent review by Chinman et al. (2014), covering 20 studies including 11 randomized controlled trials (RCTs), concluded that peer support programs bring significant benefits to those with serious mental problems, over and above the benefits of traditional care. These benefits include increases in self-care and compliance with treatment programs, reduced hospitalizations, and enhanced autonomy and sense of hope.

Peer support programs are also being used increasingly to assist those impacted by death, including family members of military casualties, parents of a children who have died, and police and firefighters who have lost friends and coworkers (Harrington-LaMorie & Ruocco, 2011; Feigelman, Jordan, McIntosh, & Feigelman, 2012).

suicide death who received peer support assistance at survivors of death due to suicide. Feigelman and colleagues found that peer support was associated with more personal growth and positive grief resolution (Feigelman, Jordan, and Gorman, 2009; Feigelman et al., 2012).

Despite these studies confirming the benefits of peer support programs for bereaved survivors, little is known about why or how they work. Also, while several organizations have developed best practice guidelines for peer support programs, these focus on peer support for patients dealing with mental illness, addictions, or chronic illnesses such as heart disease or diabetes (Daniels et al., 2013; Daniels, Fricks & Tunner, 2011; Daniels et al., 2012). Unfortunately, these guidelines do not address peer support programs for bereaved survivors of traumatic loss, as for example with war casualties, suicides, or fatal accidents. At the same time, it is known that death by sudden and violent means

DEATH STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2020.1866241

TAPS Suicide Postvention Model™: A comprehensive framework of healing and growth

Kim A. Ruocco, Carla Stumpf Patton, Kim Burditt, Bonnie Carroll, and Matt Mabe
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Arlington, Virginia, USA

Perspectives of Suicide Bereaved Individuals on Military Suicide Decedents' Life Stressors and Male Gender Role Stress

A. Graham Sterling IV, Jennifer L. Bakalar, Kanchana U. Perera, Kathryn A. DeYoung, Jill Harrington-LaMorie, Diana Haigney & ...show all
Pages 155-168 | Accepted author version posted online: 25 May 2016, Published online: 16 Jun 2016
https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2016.1166087

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https://doi.org/10.1080/13811118.2016.1166087

Peer Support for the Bereaved

Paul T. Bartone and Chantel M. Dooley

Peer Support Services for Bereaved Survivors: A Systematic Review

Paul T. Bartone¹, Jocelyn V. Bartone², John M. Violanti³, and Zaneta M. Gileno⁴

Abstract
This systematic literature review assesses the evidence regarding benefits of peer support services for bereaved survivors of sudden or unexpected death. Reports were included that addressed peer support services for adults who experienced death of a family member, close friend, or coworker. Of the 32 studies meeting all inclusion criteria, most showed evidence that peer support was helpful to bereaved survivors, reducing grief symptoms and increasing well-being and personal growth. Studies also showed benefits to providers of peer support, including increased personal growth and positive meaning in life. Several studies addressed the growing trend of internet-based peer support programs, finding that these are beneficial in part due to their easy accessibility. Peer support appears to be especially valuable for survivors of suicide loss, a result that may be related to stigma and lack of support from family and friends experienced by many suicide survivors. The reviewed studies provide consistent evidence that peer support is beneficial to bereaved survivors.

Keywords
grief, bereavement, peer support, recovery, death, suicide

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IS MILITARY GRIEF DIFFERENT?

- ★ Sudden and traumatic death differs dramatically from anticipated death
 - ★ Leading causes of death among the military: suicide, training accident, other accidents, rare and aggressive illnesses
- ★ Trauma shatters the way we look at the world
 - ★ Risk of survivors feeling accountable for death, or the death was preventable
- ★ Loss of community and identity



Risk Factors for Complicated Grief in the Military Community. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, First Published 20 May 2021. Grace E. Seamon-Lahiff, Chantel M. Dooley, Paul T. Bartone, Bonnie Carroll

A Model for Supporting Grief Recovery Following Traumatic Loss: The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). *Military Medicine*, 184(7-8), 166–170 (April 2019). Grace E. Seamon-Lahiff, Chantel M. Dooley, Laura E. Fry, Paul T. Bartone, Bonnie Carroll.



TOOLS FOR YOUR TOOLKIT

- ★ Note the use of the word “**phases**” instead of “stages”. Grief does not have stages.
- ★ Give **accurate information**, not awkward platitudes and sympathy.
- ★ Know survivors are aware that **you can't fix** what is truly broken, nor are you expected to.
- ★ No matter what you do, the family won't be "happy" or "satisfied" – but they can be reassured their loved one will be treated with **dignity and honor**.
- ★ **Follow up is so important** - if you don't know something, say that. Offer to get the information and get back in touch with them. Then get back in touch with them.
- ★ Say **their person's name** - it's the most wonderful sound we hear.



WHAT CAN YOU SAY?

- ★ “I’m very sorry.”
- ★ “You have our support. Call on us.”
- ★ “This is a great loss to the organization/nation.”
- ★ “_____ will be greatly missed.” (use their loved one’s name)
- ★ Offer choices and listen to requests
- ★ Begin conversations with those emotionally related to the deceased with an acknowledgement of their sacrifice
 - ★ not just a “statement of facts” or need for information
- ★ Focus on the life and the service rather than how and where they died



WORDS TO AVOID

- ★ The bereaved are often ***traumatized***, they are not ***mentally ill***
- ★ Acceptance - *this feels “unacceptable”*
- ★ Goodbye - *they live forever in our hearts*
- ★ Closure - *you never “close” them out of your life or forget the life and the love*
- ★ Loss - *they are not “lost”, they have died*
- ★ Move past this - *you can’t force healing*
- ★ Get on with life - *life is forever altered*
- ★ Get over it - *“it” is not something you “get over”, you must find comfort and peace within and then, somehow, create a new future*



Companioning is about:

Being present to another person's pain; it is not about taking away or relieving the pain.

Going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

Honoring the spirit; it is not about focusing on the intellect.

Listening with the heart; not analyzing with the head.

Bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing those struggles.



Companioning is about:

Walking alongside; it is not about leading.

Discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it is not about filling every painful moment with talk.

Being still; not about frantic movement forward.

Respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.

Learning from others; it is not about teaching them.

Compassionate curiosity; it is not about expertise.



PARTNERSHIPS



TAPS TRAININGS

TAPS.org/MilitaryCasualty
militarycasualty@TAPS.org

TAPS provides **virtual and in-person trainings** for Military Casualty and Military Community Partnerships to Casualty and Mortuary representatives and ships **Casualty Care Packages**

*"We just had an amazing brief about the wonderful program, TAPS, to our group here in Europe. What you and this organization do for not just grieving families of loved ones, but also the country is extraordinary. These people are members of our American community, no matter how their loved one was lost. What this organization can provide **is bigger than assisting the grieving families within the DoD entity.**"*

*These family members **become a more powerful version of themselves** as a result of this organization's resources and efforts and interject their genuine character and meaningful contributions into society, much like this organization does for each grieving person."*

– Army Casualty Notification Officer | Casualty Assistance Officer Training



Air National Guard Casualty Mortuary Affairs (CAMO)
Course at Dover Air Force Base with Mrs. Kelly
Hokanson, spouse of GEN Dan Hokanson, 29th Chief,
National Guard Bureau



RENEWING PARTNERSHIPS

“What is unique about TAPS is the **level of commitment to all survivors**,” Hokanson said. “Your loved one may not have died on the battlefield. They might not have died in a duty status. You may not be officially recognized as ‘next of kin.’ But **TAPS has built a sanctuary that transcends these distinctions**, honoring all service members who’ve lost their lives, and supporting the loved ones they left behind.”

[National Guard Chief begins Memorial Day weekend by renewing ties with survivor group](#)





TAPS IS YOUR FORCE MULTIPLIER

Without coping strategies or a long-term support system in place, survivors could experience grief severity, prolonged trauma symptoms, and complicated grief.

TAPS provides 24/7 support for you and your survivors.





TAPS IS YOUR FORCE MULTIPLIER

Connecting survivors immediately guarantees:

- ★ The likelihood survivors will seek and accept current and future assistance
- ★ Survivors will process their loss in a healthy manner and find meaning along grief journey
- ★ Individually tailored coping strategies
- ★ Positive and safe social engagement





HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Connect Survivors Immediately



Share the Mission



TAPS Engagement Opportunities

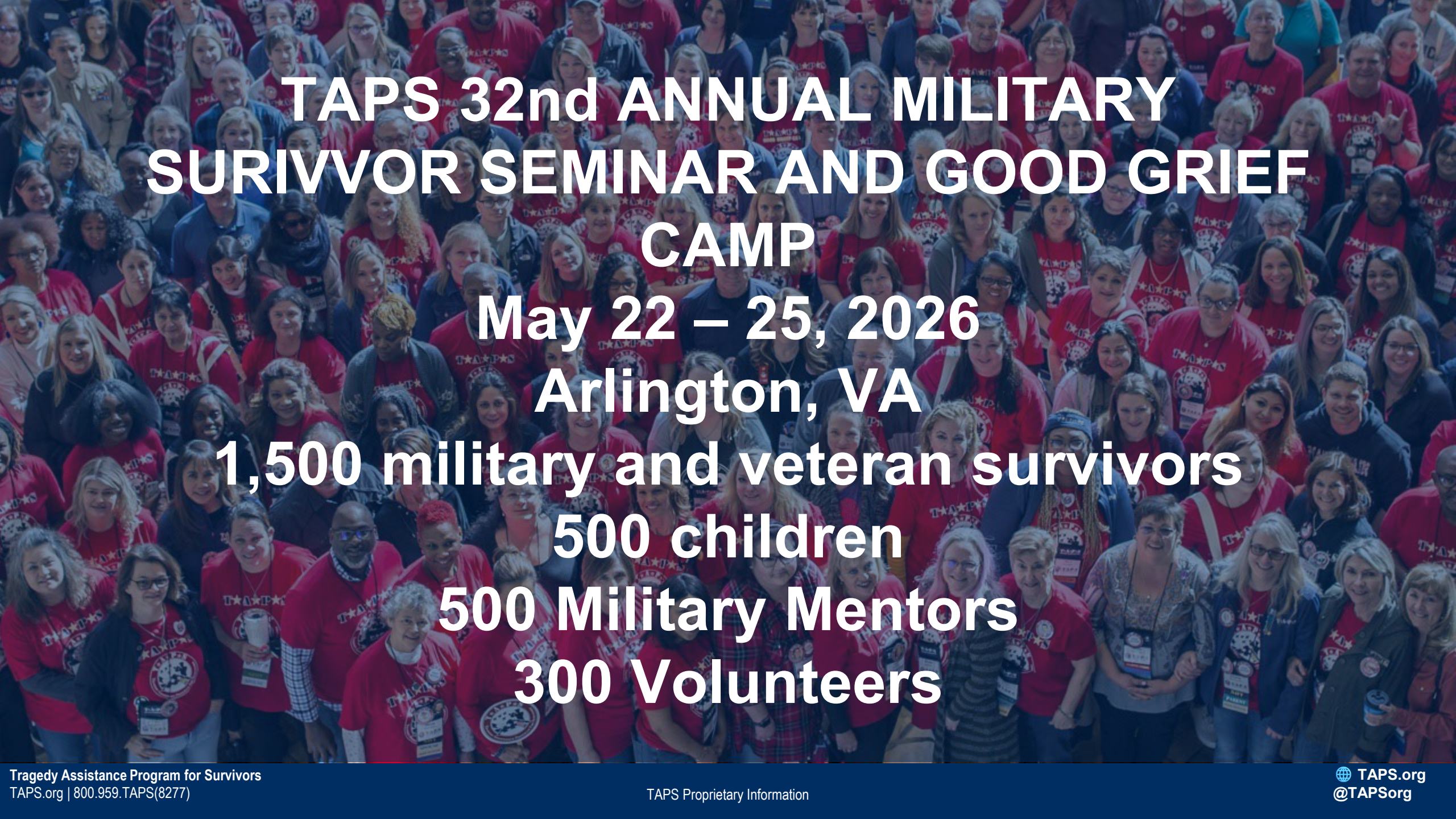


TAPS.ORG/MILITARYCASUALTY



Developed specifically for our partners in military casualty

- ★ Steps To Connect Military and Veteran Survivors with TAPS
- ★ Links to DoD, VA, and Military OneSource Resources for Survivors
- ★ Death by Suicide Toolkit for Military Leadership
- ★ Document Library for All Manners of Death
- ★ Document Library for Suicide Loss



TAPS 32nd ANNUAL MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP

May 22 – 25, 2026

Arlington, VA

1,500 military and veteran survivors

500 children

500 Military Mentors

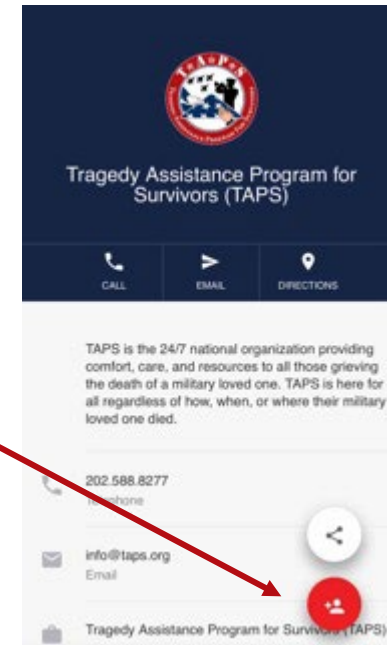
300 Volunteers



SAVE AND SHARE TAPS CONTACT



24/7 800.959.TAPS
TAPS.org/JoinTAPS





CONNECT A SURVIVOR

[TAPS.ORG/SURVIVOR](https://taps.org/survivor)

WELCOME TO THE TAPS FAMILY

TAPS is a family. A family of care, compassion and hope. We are here for you, whether you need someone to listen, a shoulder to cry on, a connection to resources, or an opportunity to remember and honor your loved one.

TAPS offers help, hope and healing to all who are grieving the death of a military or veteran loved one, regardless of the relationship to the service member or the circumstances or cause of death.

I HAVE LOST

a military or veteran loved one



JOIN THE TAPS FAMILY

I AM CONNECTING SOMEONE WHO HAS LOST

a military or veteran loved one



CONNECT A SURVIVOR TO TAPS

**“The lives of those we love, remember, and honor are carved into our soul,
imprinted on our hearts, and woven into the fabric of our nation. They make us
stronger, they inspire us, and in that way, they are eternal.”**

- Bonnie Carroll, TAPS Founder and President



The Global Gathering of Organizations Caring for Families of Military and Conflict Deceased

Burkina Faso
Georgia
Italy
Kenya
Kurdistan
Libya
Nepal
New Zealand

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
29 November to 3 December 2023

Funded by
The Royal Family of UAE
The Good Feet Store
BHE Land Systems

Poland
Romania
Somalia
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
Ukraine
United States





TAPS ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

- ★ TAPS has a vital role in implementing WPS and by providing support to survivors affected by military loss and conflict around the world.
- ★ TAPS supports global conflict survivors with grief and trauma and empowers women (often mothers and spouses) to foster peace and stability within their communities.





HOW DO WE HEAL?

Grief is a universal response to loss impacting individuals and communities. Untreated grief can contribute to adverse mental health outcomes and, if unaddressed, can drive further violence and instability.

NAVIGATING GRIEF AND ANXIETY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

In moments of **upheaval and change**, the weight of uncertainty can feel overwhelming. The **shifts in our government**, the **sudden changes in military leadership**, and the **fear of future instability** create an emotional toll that is deeply felt—especially by those who stand in quiet strength behind our service members.

NAVIGATING GRIEF AND ANXIETY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Senior military spouses carry an immense burden:

- ♥ The weight of leadership in uncertain times
- ♥ The responsibility of holding families and communities together
- ♥ The silent grief of sacrifice, change, and the unknown

NAVIGATING GRIEF AND ANXIETY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Grief is not just about loss—it is about **navigating the unknown, carrying the unspoken fears, and standing steady when the ground beneath us shifts.**

We honor those who shoulder this unseen burden. You are **the backbone of resilience, the voice of wisdom, and the heart of our military families.**

You are not alone.

We see you. We stand with you. We are here to support you.



CAPSTONE MAY 2026

Caring for the Families of America's Fallen Heroes

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TAPS.org