



FORT LEE CASUALTY ASSISTANCE CENTER
CASUALTY NOTIFICATION GUIDE FOR
THE CASUALTY NOTIFICATION OFFICER

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CASUALTY NOTIFICATION OFFICER GUIDE

The Selection

You have been selected by your installation commander to perform casualty notification duties for

1. The Preparation/Responsibilities

You are about to embark on what will be one of the most difficult duties you will be called upon to perform in your military career. **YOU represent the Secretary of the Army.** Demonstrating the following character traits will have a major impact on the professionalism of the notification process: Care, Compassion, Commitment, Concern, and Empathy. Your duty as a Casualty Notification Officer (CNO) has priority over all other duties. This guide will provide enough information to assist you in preparing and completing a casualty notification and ease some of the anxiety often experienced by individuals when called upon to perform this sensitive task. Your duties as a CNO are designed to soften the "initial impact", if possible, and to show the United States Army is genuinely concerned with its personnel and their families. Every notification is unique as a result of the individuals involved and the circumstances surrounding the incident. You must convey in every action and deed, the sincere concern of the United States Army for the feelings of the Next of Kin (NOK). Being prepared, sincere and alert to the needs of the NOK at the time of notification will reduce some of the shock that is normal under these circumstances. Remember, nothing can substitute for common sense, good judgment and sensitivity in making a casualty notification. The following information will help you during the pre-notification phase and in performing the actual notification:

a. The NOK will be notified promptly in an appropriate, dignified and understanding manner by two uniformed service representatives (CNO and the Chaplain). The two-person notification team will wear the Army Service Uniform (ASU) or Class A uniform and present a Soldierly appearance when conducting notification. The Chaplain's responsibility is to assist the CNO in the notification process. While en route the Chaplain will drive to give the CNO time to rehearse what he/she will say. The Chaplain also provides moral support and someone to talk to while heading to and from the notification.

b. The Army's policy is to make personal notification to the primary next of kin (PNOK) and Secondary Next of Kin (SNOK) of the deceased Soldier within 4 hours after notification of the death. Notification should take place during the hours from 0500 to 2400 local time unless otherwise directed. The time limits established for notification may have to be adjusted due to distances involved or other conditions, such as adverse weather. All attempts will be made to notify the PNOK first, if your efforts to contact the PNOK are unsuccessful, then contact the Casualty Area Command (CAC), immediately for guidance.

c. Learn as much as you can about the casualty, the NOK, and the circumstances surrounding the incident. The CAC will provide the following documentation:

(1) Casualty Report. Circumstances surrounding the incident resulting in the casualty.

(2) Record of Emergency Data (DD Form 93). Will allow you as the CNO to know the Soldier's Family structure.

(1) Record of Notification Actions Form

a. You will be responsible for completing the date/time of notification, place of notification, 45-day address, DOB, and telephone contact information.

(2) Meeting the Chaplain or the person accompanying you on the notification.

(3) Local procedures unique to CAC's AOR

a. Procedures such as map to the residence, phone contact with the CAC, when to return documents, cell phone use, government vehicle availability, etc.

(4) Information specific to your case, i.e. "Apparent Self-Inflicted."

d. The CAC will provide the name, relationship and address of the NOK you will be notifying and any special conditions you should be aware of (if known).

e. Have on hand the name and telephone number of the local police or sheriff department, local hospital, local ambulance service and fire department rescue squad.

f. You will be provided with a script similar to the examples in paragraph 5b.

g. The CAC will also provide a second script "Dignified Transfer/Media Access Script" to the PNOK of a Soldier that dies in theater of combat operations, to travel to Dover AFB to witness the dignified transfer and authorize media coverage. This script has to be read verbatim and as soon as practical, following the notification.

h. Review the following video's, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/Training> :

(1) CNO Training Module for Apparent Self-Inflicted Wound

(2) Dignified Transfer Video Presentation

(3) Dover Media Access & Family Travel

(4) Effects of Notification on Children

(5) Cultural Sensitivities

- (6) Emotional Responses and Risk of Suicide
- (7) Guidelines for Interacting with Next of Kin
- (8) Family Dynamics
- (9) The Chaplain's Role
- (10) Self Care

- i. Review AR 600-8-1 (Casualty Operations), Chapter 5, Notification.
- j. Review Privacy Act of 1974

2. CNO Do's and Don'ts

a. **En-route to the Residence** -

- (1) Utilize this valuable opportunity to gather your thoughts and prepare yourself, both mentally and emotionally, for the mission that you are about to undertake.
 - a. Internalize and rehearse the notification script.
 - b. Ask the Chaplain about his/her experiences or if he/she has any advice.

(2) Prior to making contact with the NOK, be sure to call the CAC and CMAOC's Travel and Transportation section to alert them of the notification that you are about to make as the NOK may be eligible to attend the Dignified Transfer. (wouldn't you want to know this before you leave and the phone number?)

b. **At the Residence** -

- (1) Leave the casualty report that has been provided to you in the vehicle.
- (2) Make sure that your cell phone is set to airplane mode, silent or turned off. Nothing is more important than the NOK and the delivery of the notification.
- (3) Disclose only information approved by the CAC.
- (4) Use words that the NOK can understand. Avoid using acronyms.

(5) (1)?Familiarize yourself with the location of the NOK. If the NOK resides within an area that you deem unsafe, contact the CAC immediately to request a police escort.

- (6) Make your visit as inconspicuous as possible without calling undue attention to the unusual presence of the military.
- (7) You may be asked by the NOK to assist in delivering the message to a child. If so, then be sure to speak with them at their physical level.

c. The Notification Visit -

1. Identify yourself to the NOK; for example: "I am Captain Sam Robinson from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 21st Ordnance, from Fort Lee, Virginia".
2. Ensure you are speaking to the correct person(s). For example, "Are you Mr. Tommy L. Jones? Are you the father of Sergeant Robert L. Jones"?
3. If at least one person to be notified is home, state that you have an important message to deliver and ask permission to enter the residence. For example, **"I have an important message to deliver from the Secretary of the Army, may I come in, Mr. Jones."**
4. Do not hurry, be as natural as possible in speech, manner, and method of delivery.

5. Convey the notification message (script) as given to you by the CAC (without reading appearing to read it). Listed below are examples:

(1) For death cases: **"The Secretary of the Army has asked me to express his deep regret that your (relationship; son, Robert or husband, Edward; etc.) (died/was killed in action) in (country/state) on (date). (State the circumstances provided by the Casualty Area Command.) The Secretary extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family in your tragic loss."**

(2) For missing cases: **"The Secretary of the Army has asked me to inform you that your (relationship; son, John or daughter, Janet; etc.) has been reported (DUSTWUN/Missing/Missing in action) in (country/state) since (date). (State the circumstances provided by the Casualty Area Command.) When we receive more information, you will be promptly notified. The Secretary extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family during this trying period."**

(3) For deaths resulting from friendly fire: **"The Secretary of the Army has asked me to express his deep regret that your (relationship) (died/was killed in action) in (country) on (date). State the circumstances). His/her death is result of suspected friendly fire. A formal investigation is being conducted. You will be further advised as additional information is received. The Secretary extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family in your tragic loss."**

(4) For deaths - positive identification not complete: **"The Secretary of the Army has asked me to express his deep regret that your (Relationship of deceased to NOK - son, daughter, husband) is believed to (have died) or (been killed in action) on (date of death), at (location). A body matching (Soldiers Name) description was found in (location). Cause of death at this time is**

under investigation. The local authorities are currently trying to establish positive identification. You will be notified as soon as identification has been established. The Secretary extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family during this trying period".

6. Do not extend overly sympathetic gestures that may be taken the wrong way. Use good judgment by not passing gory or embarrassing details.

a. Do not physically touch the NOK in any manner unless there is shock or fainting. Summon medical assistance immediately, if necessary.

d. If unable to locate the NOK -

(1) If it appears the NOK is not at home, don't park in front of the residence and wait for their return. Notify the CAC for guidance in contacting neighbors, friends, clergy, or the police department for the NOK's present whereabouts. Use caution and do not disclose the full purpose of your mission except to the NOK. The preferred place of notification is at the NOK's residence.

(2) If you are unable to locate the NOK or the NOK has moved from the immediate area, don't leave the local area. Immediately telephone the CAC for instructions.

You are saying the same thing twice.

e. NOK Reactions -

After you have delivered the notification, be prepared for an array of grief reactions from the NOK. (no emotion, shock, disbelief, denial.....)

1. No Emotion
2. Shock
3. Disbelief and/or Denial
4. Anger
5. Extreme Grief
6. Hostility
7. Avoidance

f. Ensure the NOK is informed of the following:

(1) In death cases, advise the PNOK that the Army has various disposition options, benefits, and allowances available and they should delay making any decisions on care and preparation of the remains until they have been fully briefed by the mortuary officer or the Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO).

(2) You need to verify the NOK's complete name, telephone number, and a 45-day mailing address at this time. (Complete the attached DA Form XXXX-R (Record of Casualty Notification Actions) and explain the DA Form 4475 (Privacy Act of 1974).

(3) They will be contacted within 24 hours by a CAO, who will arrange for a personal visit at their convenience (PNOK only).

(4) An in-person notification will be made to the SNOK.

(5) In order to improve the timeliness of NOK notification and reduce notification efforts, the CNO should validate with the notified NOK other NOK address information listed on the casualty's DD Form 93 (Record of Emergency Data), and the DA Form XXXX-R (Record of Casualty Notifications Actions). If discrepancies are noted, the CNO should pass the information to the CAC immediately. These actions could preclude another CNO from going to a wrong/outdated address.

(6) A letter, which will give more details, will be coming from the Soldier's commander.

Should we tell them this?

g. Information you should not discuss -

(1) Specific questions on subjects, such as insurance, death gratuity, final pay, autopsies or investigations, etc. If asked, advise the NOK that the CAO will discuss these subjects with the PNOK.

(2) Details on mortuary affairs.

(3) Personal effects of the Soldier.

(4) Questions relating to line of duty, neglect, errors of judgment or the responsibility of other personnel concerned with the incident.

(5) Your prior experiences or personal conjecture.

(6) In short, limit your discussion to information contained in the message you delivered and **DO NOT DISCUSS MATTERS THAT YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO DISCUSS.**

3. Dignified Transfer / Media Access

If you are notifying the NOK of a Soldier who died in theater, then you will be provided a second script to read after the notification has been delivered. The second script has to be read as soon as practical, following the notification. However, you must be mindful of the family's emotions and allow them time to deal with the shock of the notification. The Chaplain will help **your** gauge an appropriate time to read the second script. Remember take your cue from the family, as their well-being is our first priority. This script is read verbatim and you must stay **engage** (make eye contact) with the family while reading it.

- a. **YOU** must make it clear that the Dignified Transfer is not a ceremony or memorial service.
- b. **YOU** must stress to the PNOK that they will not be authorized to view their loved one while at Dover. (somewhere shouldn't we have CMAOC Tvl & Trans #) can we make it clear that the CNO contacts CMAOC Tvl?

Ensure the PNOK understands that they are authorized to travel with two additional family members to observe the Dignified Transfer. If they request more than two family members to travel then a request for an exception to policy will be submitted for approval to the CMAOC Director via the Travel and Transportation Section.

The next decision the PNOK must make is whether to consent to media coverage of the Dignified Transfer. Explain to the PNOK that they have three options to select from regarding media coverage of their loved one's Dignified Transfer:

- a. Option 1: Yes to full media coverage
- b. Option 2: Dover Military media only
- c. Option 3: No media at all

4. When to Leave / Prior to Departure

a. As the CNO, you must determine the appropriate time to leave the NOK's residence. The Chaplain may be able to assist you in making the call but, ultimately, the decision is yours.

b. Stay with the NOK as long as needed, but depart the residence professionally, as soon as possible. If there are no other adult members of the family at home and the news produces a shock, it may be helpful for someone to be with the next of kin. If so, ask, "**Is there anything I can do?**" or "**May I call someone or ask a neighbor to step in to assist?**"

c. Announce your departure from the residence, for example, "**Mr. Jones, I must be returning to Fort Lee, again, on behalf of the Secretary of the Army, please accept the United States Army's deepest condolences**".

d. Inform the NOK that their CAO will contact them.

e. Leave the CAC's telephone number and point of contact.

*****Ensure the attached DA Form XXXX-R (Record of Casualty Notification Actions) is completed.*****

5. Post Duties of Notification

a. Immediately, after departure from the residence, telephone the CAC, return to the CAC (or predetermined location), and advise them of the following:

- (1) Time of notification.
- (2) Confirmed address.

- (3) Home telephone number(s) where NOK can be contacted.
- (4) Any unusual events or comments by the NOK.
- (5) Notify the CAC of any NOK address changes that may effect other notification actions.
- (6) Grief Reactions
- (7) Family Dynamics
- (8) Language Requirements

b. Upon return, immediately - provide the completed DA Form XXXX-R to the CAC.

6. Final Comments

a. This guide is not intended to replace or circumvent existing regulations. However, this guide should serve as a beneficial tool in facilitating casualty notifications.

b. It is understandable that, for both the "first time" and the "experienced notification officer", there will be a certain degree of reluctance and anxiety. Your anxiety can be somewhat reduced by being well prepared, by maintaining close communication with the CAC, and, as earlier mentioned, use common sense and good judgment.

Upon completion of notifying the Next of Kin contact the Casualty Officer at 1-804-734-6606 if the notification takes place before 1630 on duty days. If notification is completed after duty hours or weekends contact the CAC at 1-804-691-7376.

RELATED QUESTIONS:

- Were any health problems noted with the PNOK/SNOK? Yes or No

If yes, brief description: _____

- Were there any language barriers with the NOK? Yes or No

If yes, brief description: _____

REMARKS:

Record of Casualty Notification Actions

1a. Name of Deceased (Last, First, Middle)	1b. Grade / Rank	1c. SSN
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1d. Organization and Station

1e. Date of Death	1f. Place of Death
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1g. Date of Birth	1h. Place of Birth (City, State or Country)
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1i. Causes / Circumstances

2a. Date and Time of Notification	2b. Place of Notification
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2c. Name of PNOK (Last, First, Middle)	2d. SSN	2e. Relationship
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2f. DOB	2g. Telephone	2h. Confirmed 45-day Address
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3a. Date and Time of Notification	3b. Place of Notification
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3c. Name of SNOK (Last, First, Middle)	3d. SSN	3e. Relationship
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3f. DOB	3g. Telephone	3h. Confirmed 45-day Address
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4a. Date and Time of Notification	4b. Place of Notification
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4c. Name of Other NOK (Last, First, Middle)	4d. SSN	4e. Relationship
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4f. DOB	4g. Telephone	4h. Confirmed 45-day Address
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5a. Name (Last, First, Middle) Address and SSN of Each Child	5b. Person with whom child resides, and relationship to child (i.e. PNOK, SNOK, other NOK)	5c. Child's Date of Birth
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