

## **Requirement:**

As the CNO you will be the first Soldier to come in contact with the Family after the death of their Soldier. You will have only one chance to “do it right.” Your actions as a CNO will influence their opinion of the Army for the rest of their lives.

## **Acronyms:**

CAC	Casualty Assistance Center
CAO	Casualty Assistance Officer
CMAB	Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Branch
CMAOC	Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Branch
CNO	Casualty Notification Officer
DOB	Date of Birth
DT	Dignified Transfer
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
LOD	Line of Duty
MIA	Missing in Action
NOK	Next of Kin
PADD	Person Authorized to Dispense Disposition
PNOK	Primary Next of Kin
POC	Point of Contact
POW	Prisoner of War
SNOK	Secondary Next of Kin
T&TS	Travel and Transportation Section

## **Forms:**

DD Form 93	Record of Emergency Data
SGLV Form 8286	Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Election and Certificate

## **Supporting Documents:**

Casualty Report (sample)  
Record of Casualty Notification Actions  
CAC Blast 11-13, released 6 April 2011  
PNOK Script  
SNOK Script

## **Laws and Regulations:**

Privacy Act of 1974	Federal Law
AR 340-21	The Army Privacy Program
AR 600-8-1	The Army Casualty Program
AR 638-2	The Army Mortuary Affairs Program

## **CMAOC Responsibilities:**

CMAOC is responsible for determining all NOK and beneficiary recipients.

CMAOC is also responsible for establishing policy, developing performance standards, and overseeing casualty operations for the entire Army, and is composed of several different functional branches.

CMAOC also includes the Past Conflict Repatriations Branch, whose mission is to collect, assess, integrate, and distribute to the next of kin, concerned citizens, and other government agencies information relating to Soldiers who remain unaccounted-for from World Wars I and II, the Korean, and the Vietnam War. They are also responsible for implementing legislation and POW repatriation plans, maintaining case files for unaccounted-for Soldiers and for conducting Army POW/MIA awareness programs.

## **CAC Responsibilities:**

CACs are responsible for:

- Providing casualty support to both Active and Reserve Component commands within their geographical area of responsibility
- Preparing and submitting casualty reports
- Coordinating notification and assistance actions with CMAOC and other supporting CACs
- Collecting and confirming personal information related to casualties from local authorities, medical treatment facilities, other CACs, or Survivors
- Training and certification of CNOs and CAOs
- Identifying and assigning Casualty Notification Officers, Chaplains, and Casualty Assistance Officers

In addition to these tasks, CACs also must sustain communication with various service providers and agencies, such as veterans' groups, funeral homes, counselors, etc. in their geographic area that may support a casualty case.

## **CNO Responsibilities:**

As a CNO, you directly represent the Secretary of the Army and are responsible for conducting the notification to the NOK. In doing so, you must:

- Use professionalism and empathy when conducting notification
- Provide support to NOK, as they are an important part of the Army Family
- Obtain NOK decisions for travel to DT; provide them POC for the T&TS at CMAOC if they plan to travel
- Read the PNOK Script or SNOK Script verbatim; emphasize that if they select "yes" to media coverage, then ultimately anyone can request a copy under FOIA

- Determine the appropriate time to depart the residence; there is no predetermined time of when to depart; use good judgment when making this decision

## **Chaplain Responsibilities:**

The Chaplain is there to assist, but you, the CNO, are the one who conducts the notification.

- The second person does not necessarily have to be an Army Chaplain; the CAC can reach out to other resources such as other Service Chaplains or civilian clergy.
- Although a Chaplain is preferred, the CAC may send a Sergeant First Class or above who is CNO-certified to support the notification officer, if a Chaplain is not readily available.

The Army insists on a two-person notification team, rather than sending the CNO alone because:

- The CNO is able to rehearse what he/she will say while the Chaplain is driving.
- The Chaplain provides moral support and someone to talk to while en route to and from the notification.

## **CNOs must:**

1. Be qualified.
  - CNO rank requirements:
    - Commissioned Officer – CPT or higher
    - Warrant Officer – CW2 or higher
    - Noncommissioned Officer – SFC or higher
  - Equal or higher in rank to the casualty and/or NOK (if military)
  - Trained and certified
2. Have good character traits.
  - Care – pay serious attention to the Family's needs
  - Compassion – display Sympathy
  - Commitment – pledge or promise to serve the Family in their time of need
  - Concern – be engaged and interested
3. Be prepared for duty.
  - Have ASU/Class A and ACUs uniforms ready
    - Be prepared to travel to Dover
  - Review CNO training handouts
  - Review the CMAOC website to re-familiarize yourself with CNO responsibilities

- View Apparent Self-Inflicted Death Primer (as applicable)
  - Review CNO Procedures in AR 600-8-1 (Chapter 5)
  - Review the Privacy Act of 1974
4. Protect the privacy of the NOK they assist, as per the Privacy Act of 1974.
- Protect the privacy of individuals from unwarranted intrusion
  - Collect only the personal information about an individual that is legally authorized and necessary to support Army Operations
  - Disclose this information only as authorized by the Privacy Act and Army Regulation 340-21, The Army Privacy Program
  - Safeguard personal information to prevent unauthorized use, access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction
5. Be prepared to answer questions.
- Use good judgment; do not reveal gory or embarrassing details
  - Remember, you only know what is contained in the casualty report: no more and no less
  - Stress to the NOK that as soon as information is available, he or she will be informed in a timely manner
  - If the NOK has specific questions, write them down and provide to the CAC so the CAO can follow up with answers as they become available

### **CNOs should:**

- Refrain from touching the NOK unless necessary for their safety.
- Not rush through the notification.
- Not impose personal opinions or personal experiences to the Family.
- Avoid embarrassing or gory details, as they may cause unnecessary stress to the Family.
- Not discuss benefits and/or entitlements. You may not know all of this information and these are for the CAO to discuss.
- Not discuss disposition of remains. This will most likely not be known at this time.
- Not use the terms like “passed away.” Always use definitive terms such as “killed,” “died,” or “dead” when making the notification.
- Never discuss questions related to errors in judgment or LOD cases of multiple casualties because the NOK may compare notes.
- Remember, you are there to make the notification; not to speculate, give your opinion or share personal experiences.

### **Notification Requirements:**

Note that your duty as a CNO takes precedence over all other responsibilities. You represent the Secretary of the Army to the Family. You also represent the Soldier's profession. It is of the utmost importance to look sharp and act in a professional manner.

Remember that time is of the essence. Notification is:

- Conducted in ASU/Class A's
- Completed within four hours of the CAC receiving the initial casualty report
- Conducted between 0500-2400; exceptions must be approved by CMAOC

## **Notification Team Briefing:**

CAC briefing will occur either:

- At the CAC,
- At a location accessible by both the CNO and Chaplain, or
- By telephone using information supplied by email/fax.

The briefing will cover or provide the following:

- Casualty Report – Details the circumstances surrounding the incident resulting in the casualty
- DD Form 93 – Details the Soldier's Family structure
- Record of Casualty Notification Action Form – Pre-populated by the CAC; CNO completes the date/time of notification, place of notification, 45-day address, DOB, and telephone contact information
- Notification script – CNO internalizes this script; never give the notification script to the Family
- All local procedures – Including phone contact with the CAC, when to return documents, cell phone use, government vehicle availability, etc.
- Introductions – Meeting the Chaplain or the person accompanying you on the notification
- Other information – As specific to your case

For apparent self-inflicted death cases, the CAC will provide you with a copy of the notification script provided by CMAOC. It is important to note that all Family members will be notified based on the same script. The script will contain only information concerning the incident. Once you see the script, this is your time to ask any questions you may have of the CAC staff.

The Army stresses the use of the term "apparent self-inflicted," and never using the term "suicide." Remember, at this point, the incident is still under investigation. You must set aside personal feelings when discussing the "apparent self-inflicted" death with NOK.

The CAC may provide the CNO with the following additional items based on the assigned NOK:

- PNOK Script (Dover Media Access Script)
- SNOK Script (Dover Media Access Script)
- A map to help the notification team locate the NOK's residence
- Emergency response numbers

### **The Notification:**

While en route to the residence is a valuable opportunity to gather your thoughts and prepare yourself for the mission that you are about to undertake. Use this time to prepare yourself, both mentally and emotionally, to conduct the notification.

Specifically, you should:

- Internalize and rehearse the notification script
- Ask the Chaplain about his/her experiences, or if he/she has any advice

For theater cases, prior to making contact with the NOK, be sure to call the CAC and the T&TS at CMAOC to alert them of the notification that you are about to make as the NOK may be eligible to attend the DT.

Once you arrive at the residence, there are things you need to remember:

- Leave casualty report and notification script in the vehicle
- Place cell phone on silent or "airplane mode"
- Stay calm, speak slowly, and be natural in your delivery
- Disclose only information approved by the CAC
- Use words that the NOK can understand; do not use acronyms
- Speak with children at their physical and age-appropriate level
- Identify your team: "I am SFC Davis from Fort Campbell, and this is Chaplain Barrett."
- Ensure you are speaking to the correct person: "Are you Mrs. Carrie Clark, the spouse of CPL Scott Clark?"
- Request permission to enter the residence: "May we come in please?"

If you arrive at the residence and the NOK is not at home:

- Move your vehicle from NOK's residence
- Do not leave the area
- Contact the CAC for guidance
  - The CAC may direct you to visit neighbors, law enforcement agencies, or the PNOK's place of employment

If the person who answers the door does not speak English, do your best to communicate with them. Then contact the CAC for guidance.

If the NOK asks your team to leave immediately following the notification, then have the Chaplain ask permission for the team to stay until an adult arrives to be with the NOK. If the NOK still insists on being left alone, provide them with the CAC contact information and explain to them that a CAO will contact them shortly. Then contact the CAC for guidance.

After you have delivered the notification, be prepared for an array of grief reactions from the NOK. Understanding the possible reactions will better enable you to perform your duty as a CNO. NOK may display:

- No Emotion
- Shock
- Disbelief and/or Denial
- Anger
- Extreme Grief
- Hostility
- Avoidance
- Medical Emergency

### **PNOK/SNOK Script for DT:**

The PNOK of a Soldier who dies in theater is authorized to travel to Dover AFB to witness the DT and to authorize media coverage. 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. This script will be provided by CMAOC.

It is important that you understand your additional role. Prior to entering the house for notification, you need to call CMAOC's T&TS to give them a "heads up" on an expected call back to coordinate travel arrangements.

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. Do not pressure the Family. The Chaplain will help you gauge an appropriate time to read the second script. As always, take your cue from the Family, as their well-being is our first priority.

Although you will read this script word-for-word (verbatim), you must stay engaged with the Family while reading it. Pace yourself and remember to make eye contact with the NOK as you read the script. Make it clear to the NOK that the DT is not a ceremony or memorial service.

- Does the PNOK desire to observe DT?
  - If "Yes," place the PNOK in direct contact with T&TS.
  - If "No," does the PNOK want to designate anyone to travel to observe DT?

- If the PNOK does not desire to travel and does not want to designate anyone to travel in his/her place, then contact T&TS and alert them of the PNOK's decision.

If the Family elects to travel, then—ideally—they will travel with their CAO. However, you need to be prepared to go if the logistics make it impossible for the CAO to accompany the Family to Dover AFB.

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

- Media: yes and DVD: yes – Then full media access and DVD
- Media: no and DVD: yes – Then no media access, DVD provided (External media and general public may request copies of DT under FOIA)
- Media: no and DVD: no – Then no coverage or recording

You, as the CNO, will annotate the decisions made by the PNOK by placing a checkmark in front of the appropriate options and signing the form. The Chaplain, or the second person who accompanies you on the notification, will sign and date as the witness. The PNOK does not have to sign this document.

## **Leaving the NOK:**

The CNO determines when it is the appropriate time to leave the NOK. The Chaplain may assist in this determination. Remember:

- Do not leave the PNOK alone
- Inform the PNOK that their CAO will contact them
- Leave the CAC's telephone number and points of contact
- Complete the Record of Casualty Notification Actions Form:
  - Time of notification
  - 45-day address
  - NOK telephone contact number
  - NOK professional title or rank, if applicable
  - NOK not accounted for on DD Form 93

## **Duties after Notification:**

Once you have left the NOK's residence, you must return to the CAC (or predetermined location) to complete some administrative tasks including:

- Turn in the Record of Casualty Notification Actions Form
- Debrief the CAC Staff and the CAO on:
  - Language requirements
  - Feelings toward the Army

- Illness of any next of kin
- Grief reactions
- Family dynamics
- Other issues

COMMENT: All forms and supporting documents listed earlier will follow. Forms and supporting documents are not formatted the same to protect the integrity of the forms and supporting documents.

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