



## TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

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### TAPS Fact Sheet & Statistics on Families of the Fallen Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

#### TAPS Mission

TAPS is the national organization that provides comfort and care for the families of America's fallen heroes. The mission of TAPS is to provide peer-based emotional support to all those who are grieving the death of someone who died in service to the United States.

Through an established peer mentoring network, online live chat programs, in-person care groups, and online support groups, TAPS supports the families of the fallen 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Survivors can connect with others in-person, TAPS grief seminars and retreats for adults, and TAPS Good Grief Camps and Campouts for children. Families and members of the public can honor the fallen through Team TAPS.

TAPS publishes and distributes grief and trauma resources, including survivor resource guides, materials and the quarterly TAPS Magazine. The TAPS casework assistance program helps families resolve difficult issues and helps families find answers to questions about benefits. TAPS connects families with community based care. Through partnerships with Vet Centers and other nonprofits, TAPS connects survivors to free and unlimited one-on-one counseling. TAPS Care groups operate around the country.

The TAPS 24/7 resource and information helpline at 1-800-959-TAPS (8277) is answered 365 days a year by a live person who is there to offer compassion, support and assistance to the families of America's fallen military.

TAPS has assisted more than 60,000 surviving family members, casualty assistance officers, chaplains, and others supporting bereaved military families since 1994. TAPS is committed to providing compassionate care to anyone who is grieving the death of someone who died while serving in the military, regardless of circumstance of death, relationship to the deceased, or geography. Services are provided free-of-charge. On average, TAPS reaches new survivors within two weeks of casualty notification.

#### When was TAPS founded?

TAPS was founded in the wake of a military tragedy, after eight soldiers were killed in a C-12 plane crash in Alaska in November 1992. Among the grieving family members was Bonnie Carroll, the military widow of Army Brigadier General Tom Carroll. The families found comfort in offering support and sharing experiences. Carroll founded TAPS in 1994, after conducting two years of research examining the resources available to support bereaved military families and benchmarking best practices at other peer-based support organizations. TAPS was designed to not replicate services offered by other organizations, the military, or the government. The heart of our organization is survivors helping survivors heal. A growing body of evidence supports this type of "companioning" as an effective strategy to assist the bereaved.

#### How many U.S. military service members die?

Deaths in the military occur due to a variety of factors, including combat, training accidents, homicides, suicides, sudden illnesses, toxic exposure, accidents, terrorist attacks and other causes of death. For more statistics related to death in the military, see the [American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics \(Jan. 2, 2015\)](#) prepared by the Congressional Research Service. Additional information issued by the military lists casualties by service branch and type of loss: [www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml)

The top four leading causes of death represented by new survivors coming to TAPS in 2015 were:

- Suicide 27.3%
- Illness 25.3%
- Accident 22.7%
- Hostile 7.8%

#### How many families are impacted by military loss?

Bereavement experts tell us that for each active duty military loss, there are 10 people, on average, significantly impacted. They are mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, fiancés, grandparents, cousins, family friends and other relatives. So far in 2016, the TAPS Family of survivors is comprised of:

- 27.4% parents (includes stepparents)
- 26.2% children (includes minor, adult, and stepchildren)
- 20.0% spouses (includes ex-spouses)
- 14.8% siblings
- And 4% or less of:
  - o fiancés or significant others
  - o grandparents
  - o aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins
  - o in-laws
  - o friends or other

#### How many lives does TAPS touch each year?

- In 2016, 3,269 new people grieving the death of a loved one in military service to America have connected with TAPS to find comfort and support. This is an increase over TAPS intake of new survivors in 2015 during the same period when 2,921 new survivors grieving the death of a service member or recent veteran came to TAPS for care. In each of the last five years, TAPS has consistently connected with more than 4,000 new survivors.
- The 24/7 TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline receives on average over 1,508 calls per month, or over 50 calls per day. TAPS received 12,066 calls so far in 2016. In 2015, the Helpline fielded a total of 15,394 calls. Many new survivors are in a state of distress and need comprehensive support through peer mentoring, connections to grief counseling and supportive programs like TAPS seminars and camps.
- As of August 2016, TAPS held 32 seminars, retreats, Good Grief Camps and Campouts to support survivors of fallen heroes. In addition, TAPS holds several events across the country at which survivors and supporters run with [Team TAPS](#) in honor of fallen heroes and to raise money and awareness for TAPS. Born out of a desire to establish relationships between sports teams and professional athletes with surviving military families, our [teams4taps](#) program has hosted 70 events across the country through August 2016.
- More than 7,300 suicide survivors receive care and support from TAPS, representing nearly 18% of the TAPS survivor population. However, the true number of suicide survivors within TAPS is closer to 30%, as many deaths are initially classified as unknown or under investigation. TAPS has seen an almost 6% increase in 2016 in suicide survivors seeking support.
- TAPS lovingly maintains consistent compassionate contact with each survivor through the following communications: our quarterly *TAPS Magazine* filled with articles offering hope and healing; invitations to survivor events including retreats, seminars, camps, wellness weekends, sporting events, and expeditions; messages of care and remembrance sent on loved one's birthdays and anniversaries of death; helpful outreach during difficult holidays; reminders of resources and support available free of charge across the nation; and other inspirational communications. In addition, TAPS reaches all those who are grieving a loss in the military through social media with a current following of over 142,000 on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

- Through the TAPS Education Assistance Program and online portal, TAPS helped nearly 300 survivors gain access to over \$20 million in scholarships and grants for post-secondary education to date in 2016. Since the program's inception in 2014, it has helped more than 1,200 surviving family members access more than \$73 million in education funding.
- TAPS provides bereavement and trauma resource reports, individually tailored to connect families with resources in their local community. Once provided, the survivor can choose when and how to utilize the resources. As of August 2016, TAPS has generated 1,110 reports for survivors. We are projecting a significant increase over 2015. Also, TAPS has made 1,122 connections in 2016 for surviving family members to free unlimited counseling.

#### **How long does it take surviving family members to “move on”?**

Survivors sometimes find the terms “moving on” or “getting over it” as offensive. The expressions “carrying on,” “coping day by day,” “moving through grief,” or “moving forward” are often more comfortable to survivors. Experts tell us that it takes on average, 5-7 years for people who have experienced the traumatic death of a close loved one, to reach their “new normal.” Long-term emotional support, through the years, is very important for people who have experienced a traumatic death.

#### **How is TAPS funded and supported?**

While TAPS has a close relationship with the military service branches, ongoing TAPS programs do not receive financial support from the government or the military. TAPS has official Memorandums of Understanding/Agreement or protocols with all the service branches. TAPS is funded by the generosity of the American public, which provides donations to support the organization's work with grieving families. Donations can be made direct at [www.taps.org/donate](http://www.taps.org/donate). In addition, TAPS is the beneficiary of thousands of donated hours through our robust [volunteer program](#). In 2015, 1,999 volunteers logged 42,520 hours in service to military survivors. In 2016, 1,400+ volunteers have already given 29,471 hours.

#### **How can people contact TAPS for more information or to support the organization?**

TAPS 24/7 resource and information helpline: 1-800-959-TAPS (8277)

TAPS online at: [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)

TAPS on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/tapsorg](http://www.facebook.com/tapsorg)

TAPS on Twitter: [@tapsorg](https://twitter.com/tapsorg)

TAPS on Instagram: [@tapsorg](https://www.instagram.com/tapsorg)

TAPS on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/SupportTAPS](http://www.youtube.com/SupportTAPS)