



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS
3033 Wilson Boulevard, Third Floor, Arlington, VA 22201
800-959-TAPS ★ 202-588-TAPS (8277) ★ www.taps.org

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) Frequently Asked Questions

How 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 to each other 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 “companionship” as an effective strategy to assist the bereaved.

How do 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: <https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas>. The top four leading causes of death represented by new survivors coming to TAPS in 2017 were:

- Suicide 31.2%
- Illness 24.7%
- Accident 21.1%
- Hostile 8.7%

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. In 2017, the TAPS family of survivors is comprised of:

- 26.4% children (includes minor, adult and stepchildren)
- 24.7% parents (includes stepparents)
- 21.6% spouses (includes ex-spouses)



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- 11.2% siblings
- And 16% are fiancés or significant others, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws, friends, etc.

How many lives does TAPS touch each year?

- In 2017, 5,715 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 a 20 percent increase over TAPS intake of new survivors in 2016. The three-year average of new survivors is 4,977 per year coming to TAPS.
- The 24/7 TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline receives on average over 1,427 calls per month, or over 46 calls per day. TAPS received 17,125 calls in total in 2017. In 2016, the Helpline fielded a total of 16,312 calls. Many new survivors are in a state of distress and need immediate comprehensive support through peer mentoring, connections to grief counseling and supportive programs like TAPS seminars and camps.
- In 2017, TAPS held 37 seminars, retreats, expeditions, Good Grief Camps and Campouts to support survivors of fallen heroes. In addition, TAPS held 9 events across the country at which 966 survivors and supporters ran with Team TAPS in honor of fallen heroes and to raise awareness for TAPS. In addition, 142 participants attended seven Inner Warrior events across the country. Finally, born out of a desire to establish relationships between with the sports and entertainment industries and surviving military families, our teams4taps program has hosted an additional 179 events in 2017, with stars4taps offering an additional 22 events.
- More than 10,000 suicide loss survivors receive care and support from TAPS. TAPS has seen a 25.5% increase in suicide loss survivors seeking support since the end of 2016.
- TAPS lovingly maintains consistent compassionate contact with each survivor through the following communications: our quarterly TAPS Magazine filled with articles offering hope and healing; a monthly survivor newsletter; 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 more than 176,000 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.