



Care Team's Role in Unit Casualty



Objectives of Care Team's Role

- To provide overview of casualty notification procedures and identify Army's casualty response team
- To discuss purpose of Unit Care Teams and how they are established
- To identify Care Team volunteers' responsibilities
- To provide tips and tools



Key Casualties of Interest

- Injured or ill*
 - Very Seriously Injured or Ill (VSI)
 - Seriously Injured or Ill (SI)
 - Not seriously injured (NSI)
- Deceased*
- Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN)
- Missing in action (MIA)

* Focus of Care Teams



Casualty Notification Process

- Commander reports incident to Casualty Operations Branch
- Casualty Assistance Center (CAC) produces casualty report after verifying incident
- Family is notified
 - In person by Casualty Notification Officer (CNO) when deceased, DUSTWUN, or MIA
 - By telephone by rear detachment or CAC when VSI or SI
 - By telephone when NSI as a result of hostile action (exceptions may apply)



Army's Casualty Response Team

- Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO)* – assists with personnel-related issues, coordinate burial arrangements, arrange emergency financial assistance
- Chaplain* – provides pastoral counseling and comfort
- Unit Commander/RDC* – identifies resources and coordinate support for Family and oversee Care Team
- Public Affairs Officer (PAO) – handles media and provide guidance on dealing with media
- Medical Family Assistance Center (MEDFAC) – provides information and support (when mass casualty)
- Family Assistance Center (FAC) – provides information and support

*Have assigned responsibilities by Army Regulation



Overview of Care Team Operations

- Family is asked if it wants support from Care Team
- If Family accepts, Unit Commanders assembles a team of 3 to 6 trained individuals that Family would most likely be comfortable with
- Commanders may appoint a Care Team leader
- Care Team members determine the area(s) of Family support for which each member is responsible and how team will work together
- Care Team reports to Unit Commander
- Care Team is not contacted until after primary next of kin has been notified



Purpose and Role of a Care Team

- Provides short-term emotional and logistical support to Families of fallen and wounded Soldiers.
- Assists prior to arrival of extended Family or when extended Family not available.
- Actual support provided depends on Family needs, but can include:
 - Call support
 - Home care assistance
 - Meal support
 - Babysitting or temporary childcare arrangements
 - Assist visiting Family Members
 - House sitting
- Supplements assistance provided by others.
- The length of time to assist the Family depends on Family needs and command guidance.



Care Team Volunteer Responsibilities

- When notified, be able to step into role quickly (i.e., rearrange schedule and make necessary arrangements).
- Bring necessary supplies (e.g., forms).
- Provide comfort, listen, and fulfill appropriate Family requests. Stick to Care Team role.
- Write down Family's questions for CAO and Commander.
- Maintain Family privacy and confidentiality.
- Keep CDR/RDC informed of Family's requests and support provided. (Care team leader's responsibility)



Care Team Resources

- Unit Commander/RDC
- Chaplain
- Army Community Service
- FRG Leader



Care Team Resources

- Care Team Handbook and forms
- Other handouts and resources
(may be provided by leadership)
- Compassion fatigue handout and training



Issues Care Teams Face

- Understanding and dealing with Family reactions
- Dealing with stress
- Avoiding compassion fatigue



Understanding Family's Reactions

Physical	Emotional/Cognitive		Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained somatic symptoms • Feeling jumpy; easily startled • Loss of appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grief/traumatic grief • Anger • Fear • Disbelief/shock • Numbness • Helplessness • Hopelessness • Confusion • Depression • Anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep disturbances • Nightmares/flashbacks or dreams about deceased • Distrust • Guilt; Survivor guilt • Resentment • Loss of confidence in self and others • Questioning of beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying • Irritability • Withdrawal • Increased use of cigarettes and alcohol • Increased Family conflict and violence • Relationship difficulties



Reasons for Family's Reactions

- Family is experiencing:
 - Unanticipated event
 - Injury or death
 - Loss (personal and symbolic)
 - A prolonged sense of crisis or lack of control feeling
 - Additional stressors
- Families/individuals will struggle to find meaning in the event (e.g., *why did this happen?*)
- Reactions are a response to stress, fear, vulnerability, and loss created by the casualty incident



Tip: Dealing with Family Reactions

- Extend condolences to Family and extended Family.
- Allow Families to talk and vent their feelings.
- Listen patiently and nonjudgmentally.
- Provide comfort and reassurance.
- Be patient. Families need time to heal and adjust.
- Respect Family's privacy and religious and cultural beliefs.



Tip: Dealing with Reactions (continued)

- Encourage Family to have contact with their support network and connect with others.
- Let Family know professional help is available if Family feels unable to function or is struggling with emotional response.
- Be sure to listen and comfort children.
- Accept that you may not be able to make Family feel better.



Issue: Stress and Compassion Fatigue

- Potential Stressors
 - Chaotic environment
 - Long hours
 - Breadth of Family needs
 - Ambiguous role/family requests
 - Exposure to Family's suffering
 - Limited resources
- Personal reactions to casualty incident
- Compassion fatigue



Tip: Self Awareness

- Know signs of stress
- Know signs of compassion fatigue
 - Posttraumatic stress
 - Emotions and behaviors similar to Family's (vicarious traumatization)



Tip: Take Care of Self

- Maintain health and well-being
- Manage demands and have the proper mindset for the job
- Take action “when stressed out”
- Find effective ways to relax



West Point Casualty Response Policy Review

CARE Team Leaders will:

- ☐ Sign CARE Team Agreements
- ☐ Select CARE Team members
- ☐ Activate CARE team to address Families' immediate needs



West Point Casualty Response Policy Review

Sponsors will:

- ☐ Maintain at least monthly contact with Family to ensure major concerns are addressed
- ☐ Ensure Families are invited to agency department, or unit events
- ☐ Coordinate with agency department, or unit to ensure Soldiers are recognized appropriately upon return from deployment



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OPERATION
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Questions?

Please e-mail your questions to amyjo.johnson@usma.edu



Closing Remarks

Thank you for volunteering as a Care Team Leader and/or sponsor for your unit. Care Teams and Sponsors offer valuable support to Families. While serving as a Care Team Leader and/or sponsor may be stressful, it is a rewarding experience and appreciated by the Family and Unit.

Please remember Army Community Service is here to support you throughout your time as a Care Team Leader and/or sponsor.

If you need assistance please call 845-938-5654.