

“(4) The relief or transfer of casualty assistance officers, including notification to survivors and next of kin of the reassignment of such officers to other duties.

“(5) Centralized, short-term and long-term case-management procedures for casualty assistance by each military department, including rapid access by survivors of military decedents and casualty assistance officers to expert case managers and counselors.

“(6) The provision, through a computer accessible Internet website and other means and at no cost to survivors of military decedents, of personalized, integrated information on the benefits and financial assistance available to such survivors from the Federal Government.

“(7) The provision, at no cost to survivors of military decedents, of legal assistance by military attorneys on matters arising from the deaths of such decedents, including tax matters, on an expedited, prioritized basis.

“(8) The provision of financial counseling to survivors of military decedents, particularly with respect to appropriate disposition of death gratuity and insurance proceeds received by surviving spouses, minor dependent children, and their representatives.

“(9) The provision of information to survivors and next of kin of military decedents on mechanisms for registering complaints about, or requests for, additional assistance related to casualty assistance.

“(10) Liaison with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration in order to ensure prompt and accurate resolution of issues relating to benefits administered by those agencies for survivors of military decedents.

“(11) Data collection regarding the incidence and quality of casualty assistance provided to survivors of military decedents, including surveys of such survivors and military and civilian members assigned casualty assistance duties.

“(12) The process by which the Department of Defense, upon request, provides information (in person and otherwise) to survivors of a military decedent on the cause of, and any investigation into, the death of such military decedent and on the disposition and transportation of the remains of such decedent, which process shall—

“(A) provide for the provision of such information (in person and otherwise) by qualified Department of Defense personnel;

“(B) ensure that information is provided as soon as possible after death and that, when requested, updates are provided, in accordance with the procedures established under this paragraph, in a timely manner when new information becomes available;

“(C) ensure that—

“(i) the initial provision of such information, and each such update, relates the most complete and accurate information available at the time, subject to limitations applicable to classified information; and

“(ii) incomplete or unverified information is identified as such during the course of the provision of such information or update; and

“(D) include procedures by which such survivors shall, upon request, receive updates or supplemental information from qualified Department of Defense personnel.

“(c) **ADOPTION BY MILITARY DEPARTMENTS.**—Not later than November 1, 2006, the Secretary of each military department shall prescribe regulations, or modify current regulations, on the policies and procedures of such military department on the provision of casualty assistance to survivors and next of kin of military decedents in order to conform such policies and procedures to the policy developed under subsection (a).

“(d) **REPORT ON IMPROVEMENT OF CASUALTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.**—Not later than December 1, 2006, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

“(1) the assessment of the Secretary of the adequacy and sufficiency of the current casualty assistance programs of the military departments;

“(2) a plan for a system for the uniform provision to survivors of military decedents of personalized, accurate, and integrated information on the benefits and financial assistance available to such survivors through the casualty assistance programs of the military departments under subsection (c); and

“(3) such recommendations for other legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate to enhance and improve such programs to achieve their intended purposes.

“(e) **GAO REPORT.**—

“(1) **REPORT REQUIRED.**—Not later than July 1, 2006, the Comptroller General shall submit to the committees specified in subsection (d) a report on the evaluation by the Comptroller General of the casualty assistance programs of the Department of Defense and of such other departments and agencies of the Federal Government as provide casualty assistance to survivors and next of kin of military decedents.

“(2) **ASSESSMENT.**—The report shall include the assessment of the Comptroller General of the adequacy of the current policies and procedures of, and funding for, the casualty assistance programs covered by the report to achieve their intended purposes.”

§ 1476. Death gratuity: death after discharge or release from duty or training

(a)(1) Except as provided in section 1480 of this title, the Secretary concerned shall pay a death gratuity to or for the survivors prescribed in section 1477 of this title of each person who dies within 120 days after discharge or release from—

(A) active duty; or

(B) inactive-duty training (other than work or study in connection with a correspondence course of an armed force or attendance, in an inactive status, at an educational institution under the sponsorship of an armed force or the Public Health Service).

(2) A death gratuity may be paid under paragraph (1) only if the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines that the death resulted from an injury or disease incurred or aggravated during—

(A) the active duty or inactive-duty training described in paragraph (1); or

(B) travel directly to or from such duty.

(b) For the purpose of this section, the standards and procedures for determining the incurrence or aggravation of a disease or injury are those applicable under the laws relating to disability compensation administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, except that there is no requirement under this section that any incurrence or aggravation have been in line of duty.

(c) This section does not apply to the survivors of persons who were temporary members of the Coast Guard Reserve at the time of their death.

(Added Pub. L. 85-861, §1(32)(A), Sept. 2, 1958, 72 Stat. 1452; amended Pub. L. 99-661, div. A, title VI, §604(e)(2), Nov. 14, 1986, 100 Stat. 3877; Pub. L. 101-189, div. A, title XVI, §1621(a)(1), (2), Nov. 29, 1989, 103 Stat. 1602, 1603.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised section	Source (U.S. Code)	Source (Statutes at Large)
1476(a)	38:1133(a).	Aug. 1, 1956, ch. 837.
1476(b)	38:1101(4)(D) (as applicable to 38:1133(a)). 38:1101(5)(D) (as applicable to 38:1133(a)). 38:1101(6)(B)(ii) (as applicable to 38:1133(a)).	§§ 102(2) (last sentence, as applicable to death gratuity under § 303(a)), 102(4)(D) (as applicable to § 303(a)), 102(5)(D) (as applicable to § 303(a)), 102(6)(A) (clause (3) of 2d sentence, as applicable to death gratuity under § 303(a)), 102(6)(B)(ii) (as applicable to § 303(a)), 303(a), (c), 70 Stat. 858, 859, 868, 869.
1476(c)	38:1133(c).	
1476(d)	38:1101(2) (last sentence, as applicable to death gratuity under 38:1133(a)). 38:1101(6)(A) (clause (3) of 2d sentence, as applicable to death gratuity under 38:1133(a)).	

In subsection (a), the words “Except as provided in section 1480 of this title” are inserted to reflect 38:1134(a). The words “to the survivor prescribed by section 1477 of this title” are inserted for clarity. The words “on or after January 1, 1957” are omitted as executed. The words in parentheses in clause (2) are inserted to reflect 38:1101(6)(A) (2d sentence). The words “active duty for training” are omitted as covered by the definition of “active duty” in section 101(22) of this title.

In subsection (c), the word “criteria” is omitted as covered by the word “standards”.

AMENDMENTS

1989—Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 101-189, § 1621(a)(2), substituted “Secretary of Veterans Affairs” for “Administrator of Veterans Affairs”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 101-189, § 1621(a)(1), substituted “Department of Veterans Affairs” for “Veterans’ Administration”.

1986—Pub. L. 99-661 added subsec. (a), redesignated subsecs. (c) and (d) as (b) and (c), respectively, and struck out former subsecs. (a) and (b) which read as follows:

“(a) Except as provided in section 1480 of this title, the Secretary concerned shall have a death gratuity paid to or for the survivor prescribed by section 1477 of this title of each person who dies within 120 days after his discharge or release from—

“(1) active duty; or

“(2) inactive duty training (other than work or study in connection with a correspondence course of an armed force or attendance, in an inactive status, at an educational institution under the sponsorship of an armed force or the Public Health Service);

if the Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs determines that the death resulted from (A) disease or injury incurred or aggravated while performing duty under clause (1) or the travel described in subsection (b), or (B) injury incurred or aggravated while performing training under clause (2) or the travel described in subsection (b)(2).

“(b) The travel covered by subsection (a) is—

“(1) authorized travel to or from the duty described in subsection (a)(1); or

“(2) travel directly to or from the duty or training described in subsection (a)(1) or (2) that is performed by a Reserve who, when authorized or required by an authority designated by the Secretary, assumed an obligation to perform that duty or training and whose injury was incurred or aggravated after December 31, 1956.”

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1986 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 99-661 applicable with respect to persons who, after Nov. 14, 1986, incur or aggravate an injury, illness, or disease or die, see section 604(g) of Pub. L. 99-661, set out as a note under section 1074a of this title.

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

For transfer of authorities, functions, personnel, and assets of the Coast Guard, including the authorities

and functions of the Secretary of Transportation relating thereto, to the Department of Homeland Security, and for treatment of related references, see sections 468(b), 551(d), 552(d), and 557 of Title 6, Domestic Security, and the Department of Homeland Security Reorganization Plan of November 25, 2002, as modified, set out as a note under section 542 of Title 6.

§ 1477. Death gratuity: eligible survivors

(a) DESIGNATION OF RECIPIENTS.—(1) On and after July 1, 2008, or such earlier date as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe, a person covered by section 1475 or 1476 of this title may designate one or more persons to receive all or a portion of the amount payable under section 1478 of this title. The designation of a person to receive a portion of the amount shall indicate the percentage of the amount, to be specified only in 10 percent increments, that the designated person may receive. The balance of the amount of the death gratuity, if any, shall be paid in accordance with subsection (b).

(2) If a person covered by section 1475 or 1476 of this title has a spouse, but designates a person other than the spouse to receive all or a portion of the amount payable under section 1478 of this title, the Secretary concerned shall provide notice of the designation to the spouse.

(b) DISTRIBUTION OF REMAINDER; DISTRIBUTION IN ABSENCE OF DESIGNATED RECIPIENT.—If a person covered by section 1475 or 1476 of this title does not make a designation under subsection (a) or designates only a portion of the amount payable under section 1478 of this title, the amount of the death gratuity not covered by a designation shall be paid as follows:

(1) To the surviving spouse of the person, if any.

(2) If there is no surviving spouse, to any surviving children (as prescribed by subsection (d)) of the person and the descendants of any deceased children by representation.

(3) If there is none of the above, to the surviving parents (as prescribed by subsection (c)) of the person or the survivor of them.

(4) If there is none of the above, to the duly-appointed executor or administrator of the estate of the person.

(5) If there is none of the above, to other next of kin of the person entitled under the laws of domicile of the person at the time of the person’s death.

(c) TREATMENT OF PARENTS.—For purposes of subsection (b)(3), parents include fathers and mothers through adoption. However, only one father and one mother may be recognized in any case, and preference shall be given to those who exercised a parental relationship on the date, or most nearly before the date, on which the decedent entered a status described in section 1475 or 1476 of this title.

(d) TREATMENT OF CHILDREN.—Subsection (b)(2) applies, without regard to age or marital status, to—

(1) legitimate children;

(2) adopted children;

(3) stepchildren who were a part of the decedent’s household at the time of his death;

(4) illegitimate children of a female decedent; and

(5) illegitimate children of a male decedent—