

**FAMILY ASSISTANCE REPRESENTATIVE (FAR)
QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE**



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Family Assistance Representative Checklist

This checklist will assist you with your assignment as a Family Assistance Representative (FAR). This guide will not cover every possible situation that may arise, but should serve to cover the basics. You have been selected because of your ability to use good judgment. To avoid difficulties, realize that you are not an expert in these matters. The deceased member's commander and the mortuary officer are your best sources for information to help the family to which you are assigned.

NAME/GRADE OF DECEASED: _____
 ORGANIZATION/BASE MEMBER ASSIGNED: _____

PERSON AUTHORIZED TO DIRECT DISPOSITION (PADD): _____
 PRIMARY NEXT-OF-KIN (PNOK): _____
 ADDRESS: _____
 TELEPHONE: _____

I was appointed as Family Assistance Representative (FAR) on: _____

		YES	TIME/DATE
1.	I have received a FAR Appointment Letter.		
2.	I have reviewed the AFMAO JIT (Just-in-time) training slides.		
3.	I have been briefed by the Mortuary Officer/Technician regarding family dynamics/special circumstances.		
4.	I have thoroughly read Chapter 13 of AFI 34-242 (attached).		
5.	I have filled in the local Frequently Used Numbers.		
6.	I have started a detailed chronological log of events.		
7.	I have introduced myself to the PADD/PNOK either by phone or in person, and have provided the FAR brochure.		
8.	I have remained in daily contact with the PADD/PNOK until relieved of this duty.		
9.	I have provided regular updates, written or oral, to the Mortuary Affairs Officer/Technician.		
10.	I have turned in my Events Log and After Action report to the Mortuary Officer once I have been relieved of FAR duty, and after verifying that the FAR Duties Completion letter has been mailed to the PADD.		

Additional Checklist for Traveling FARs

		YES
11.	I have DTS orders with rental car and lodging in hand.	
12.	I have packed blues, my TDY uniform of the day (bring ABUs if traveling to Dover AFB).	
13.	I have filled in page 5 of this guide prior to departure, of the personnel supporting the PADD/PNOK.	
14.	I have contacted the supporting CAR for coordination while on location.	
15.	I have a GPS or map of the TDY area.	
16.	I have printed and available to me: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The PADD/PNOK's names, addresses and phone numbers - A copy of the FAR Quick Reference Guide - A copy of the FAR JIT training - A notepad or other note-taking device 	
17.	I have determined how often the PADD/PNOK wishes to have contact with me while I am in their local area.	
18.	If the PADD is different than the PNOK, and the PNOK does not have a separate FAR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have called the PNOK to provide condolences and my contact info, and have determined their needs - I have passed on PNOK's questions/requests to the MO 	
19.	I have provided daily updates, written or oral, to the Mortuary Affairs Officer/Technician at home station.	

FREQUENTLY USED NUMBERS

AGENCY	PHONE NUMBER
Mortuary Officer	
Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR)	
Airman & Family Readiness Center	
Legal Assistance/Judge Advocate	
Installation Chaplains	
Base Mental Health Clinic	
Base Medical Treatment Facility	
AF Mortuary Affairs Division (AFMAO)	800-531-5803
Air Force Families Forever	302-677-2328
AF Casualty Matters Division	808-449-0310
AF Military Pay (DFAS)	800-321-1080
Department of Veterans Affairs	800-827-1000
VA National Cemetery System	800-827-1000
VA Memorial Programs Service	800-697-6947
VA Readjustment Counseling Services Call Center	800-905-4675
Department of Social Security	800-772-1213
Military One Source	800-342-9647
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors*	800-959-8277

**This organization is a non-profit org for military survivors*

Chapter 13

FAMILY ASSISTANCE REPRESENTATIVE FOR FAMILIES OF DECEASED AIRMEN

13.1. Introduction.

13.1.1. Introduction. The Family Assistance Representative (FAR) is part of a greater team that assembles to provide maximum support and assistance to a family who has lost an Airman. His or her primary role is to be a facilitator of support between the Air Force and the family, acting as a liaison to seek subject matter experts (SMEs) to address family needs that may include resources, services or information. They are a trusted and compassionate military presence at a very devastating time in a family's lives.

13.1.2. Philosophy. The FAR is based upon the three tenets: Care, Service, and Support. Care for families begins with empathy and extends to ensuring that the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of families are attended to, to the greatest extent possible. Service is ensuring the coordination of suitable resources for the greatest effect in assisting individual families, without substituting as subject matter expert. Support incorporates care and service, and adds compassion, empathy and sustenance to all assistance delivered.

13.2. Key Personnel in the Delivery of Services.

13.2.1. Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations/Mortuary Affairs Division (AFMAO/MA). AFMAO provides guidance, consultation and training products to installation Mortuary Officers (MOs) who have mortuary affairs mission execution responsibilities.

13.2.1.1. AFMAO assists in all situations requiring multiple FAR assignments where assistance is needed from installations other than the home station of the fallen Airman.

13.2.2. Installation Commander. The installation commander, or senior AF officer within the joint base organizational structure, shall act as the installation commander for the purposes of mortuary affairs in this chapter and will ensure that a FAR is assigned in all cases that originate within a unit located on their installation, to include tenant units and detachments.

13.2.3. Home Station Unit Commander. The unit commander of a fallen Airman chooses and recommends to the MO, or alternate MO, the name of a unit member selected to serve as the FAR, and ensures that individual is placed on TDY orders, as necessary. The primary concern for the unit commander is to ensure that the assigned FAR is emotionally and mentally mature enough to assist the family, and meets the criteria outlined in **paragraphs 13.3.4. and 13.3.7.**

13.2.4. FAR. The FAR is assigned to assist the PADD and the PNOK of an active duty Airman. He or she will reach out to subject-matter-experts (SMEs) who will correspond directly with the family member to respond to their questions or concerns. The FAR's primary responsibility is to help insure the family's immediate needs are met by identifying resources available for their individual circumstances.

13.2.5. Installation Mortuary Officer (MO). The MO is responsible for accepting the unit commander's recommended FAR, and generating that individual's special appointment orders. The MO, or designee, will ensure the requisite training is provided and ensure background regarding the deceased's information and family construct/dynamics, is provided prior to the FAR being introduced to the family to which they have been assigned to assist. The MO is also responsible for providing assistance and supervision to the FAR for the duration of his or her assignment.

13.2.5.1. The MO, or designee, will ensure the FAR is provided with a folder of printed materials designed to assist him or her with FAR duties: a copy of this chapter, including all attachments; the FAR Quick Reference Guide, and a FAR Brochure that is to be given to the assigned family. These resources can be found on the AFMAO CoP.

13.2.5.2. The MO will send a Completion of FAR Duties letter to the PNOK/PADD supported by the appointed FAR. Letter and training products can be found on the AFMAO CoP.

13.2.6. Installation Mortuary Affairs Technician (MA Tech). The MA Tech assist the MO in the execution of his/her duties, and will execute duties as assigned with regard to FAR appointment and training. The MA Tech creates the deceased's mortuary case file and will ensure the FAR log of events is included when closed out.

13.2.7. Casualty Assistance Representative (CAR). Executes their duties in accordance with AFI 36-3002, and will be available to the FAR should the family have questions regarding casualty benefits and entitlements. When possible, the FAR will partner with the CAR to support the PADD/PNOK as a team.

13.2.8. Military Support Agencies. There are many different support agencies that exist on any given installation and within local communities. The FAR should have a working knowledge of the role of those agencies at his or her installation. Some examples of these organizations include the Mental Health Clinic, Chaplain Corps, and the Airman Family Readiness Center.

13.3. Air Force FAR Program Service Delivery.

13.3.1. Program overview. The FAR for deceased personnel is a key conduit for interactions between the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD)/Primary Next-of-Kin (PNOK) of a deceased Airman and any agencies or organizations with which the family needs assistance. The primary concern for a FAR is the well-being of the family to which they have been assigned.

13.3.2. Persons eligible to be assigned a FAR. All family members who are eligible to receive benefits or entitlements, as a result of the loss of an Airman, are eligible to be supported by a FAR. However, efforts will be made to assign only one FAR, as the intention of the FAR program is to provide continuity of information. Multiple FARs assigned can result in unintended complications and confusion as a result of increased communication conduits.

13.3.3. When to appoint a FAR. Upon notification of the death of an Airman who dies while on active duty or ARC personnel entitled to receive active duty mortuary entitlements.

13.3.4. Selecting a FAR. The overarching consideration for selecting a FAR will be on the basis of the individual's maturity and capacity to assist the family of a fallen Airman. It is highly recommended that caution be exercised in assigning a FAR who has close ties to the deceased member or their family, due to the possibility that they may also be traumatized by the death of the Airman, which can impede their ability to perform FAR duties effectively. Leadership is responsible for ensuring that the FAR is watched closely for burn out or any other signs of mental or emotional deterioration. Guidelines and considerations for FAR selection:

13.3.4.1. Where practical, and at the discretion of the unit commander, the FAR should hold the rank of E-7 or higher for enlisted personnel; an officer of equal or greater rank for commissioned personnel. In the rare instance that a DoD civilian would perform these duties, their grade should be commensurate with or greater than that of the deceased member.

13.3.4.2. Availability. Appointed personnel will be released from regular mission responsibilities in order to perform FAR duties full-time. FARs often assist families outside normal business hours and should be able to make the appropriate time commitment. Any personnel considered to serve as a FAR should not be scheduled for leave, deployment, TDY or PCS move.

13.3.4.3. Career field. Whenever possible, the FAR will hold the same AFSC and type of job as the deceased Airman. If an Airman meeting the career field requirements, within the appropriate grade requirements, is not available, a member from within the squadron but different flight should be sought. (i.e. If the fallen is EOD, the FAR should come from EOD flight or another flight within the CES).

13.3.4.4. Volunteers. It is encouraged to only use volunteers to serve as a FAR. In the absence of a volunteer, a FAR will be appointed.

13.3.4.5. Leadership. Commanders and First Sergeants will not serve as FAR as their responsibility is to the unit as a whole.

13.3.5. Assigning a FAR. FARs should be identified within 12-hours of notification of an AF active duty death; orders and training should be completed within 24-hours of the FAR being identified.

13.3.5.1. Notification of assignment. All efforts will be made to include the assigned FAR in the Initial Death Message. The initial death message and all supplemental messages will be sent to the AFMAO/MA organizational e-mail box (afmao.ma@us.af.mil), in addition to the recipients as listed in AFI 34-242. The following FAR information will be included in, or updated in the initial/supplemental death message(s):

13.3.5.1.1. Name and Rank.

13.3.5.1.2. Base and unit of assignment.

13.3.5.1.3. Duty phone number.

13.3.5.1.4. Cell phone number.

13.3.5.1.5. Date assigned.

13.3.5.2. Introducing the FAR. The MO will apprise the family of the role of a FAR and insure that they wish to be assigned a FAR. Once this has been determined, the MO will provide the name and rank of the FAR, and let the PADD/PNOK know they will receive an introductory call from the FAR.

13.3.5.3. FAR connection with the family. Face-to-face contact with the family will begin on or about the same time as the CAR's initial outreach, but will be dictated by the family's needs. Ideally, the FAR and the CAR will meet the family together. It is discouraged for the FAR to meet with family members alone.

13.3.6. Training Requirements. Training is divided into two categories: Annual Awareness training and Just-in-Time (JIT) training, both of which can be found on the AFMAO CoP. All training will be conducted in accordance with this guidance as follows:

13.3.6.1. Leadership training requirements. The Force Support Squadron will facilitate FAR Annual Awareness training for Wing, Group and Squadron Commanders, Chiefs, First Sergeants.

13.3.6.1.1. The FSS may provide face-to-face Annual Awareness training, or they may elect to provide the power point presentation, or other subsequent training provided by AFMAO/MA, via electronic distribution.

13.3.6.2. FAR training requirements. JIT training will be provided to newly appointed FARs by the MO or MA Tech within 24-hours of being identified as the FAR for an active duty death. In addition to JIT training, a printable FAR Quick Reference Guide and FAR Brochure can be found on the AFMAO CoP. The FAR Quick Reference Guide will serve as a tool to enhance the performance of FAR duties; the customizable FAR Brochure will help the assigned family member(s) understand the role of a FAR, as well as provide important contact information (See ~~Attachments 11, 12, and 13~~).

13.3.6.2.1. The MO should provide the FAR with basic information about the deceased, if not previously known to the FAR, and apprise of any known family dynamics.

13.3.6.3. Content of Training. Mandatory FAR Annual Awareness training is specifically designed to provide installation leadership with the basic knowledge of the proper methods of identifying and appointing an appropriate FAR for a deceased Airman. The installation MO will make revisions and additions as needed to address specific local conditions. JIT training will prepare the appointed FAR with the required instructions needed to assist the family; JIT training will include local resource and case-specific information.

13.3.7. Duties and Responsibilities of the FAR. FARs should have a basic understanding of the various functional specialists' areas of expertise without trying to become experts themselves, and to seek out the appropriate SMEs for thorough answers to any specific questions families might have. Below is a list of common duties and responsibilities of a FAR after the initial introductions have been made:

13.3.7.1. Coordinating assorted services. The FAR will assist the family in coordinating the delivery of entitlements, special pay or benefits available to them by ensuring the family is connected with the appropriate agencies' SMEs. The FAR will assist the family with any other necessary services, resources or information that can assist during a very difficult time, while also attempting to anticipate future needs they may require.

13.3.7.2. Funeral/unit memorial arrangements. The appointed FAR may be present during funeral or memorial services planning, if requested by the PADD, to take notes that may be of assistance to the family.

13.3.7.2.1. The FAR, along with other personnel from the home station unit of the fallen Airman, will provide logistical support to family members that travel to the losing installation for the installation/unit memorial service.

13.3.7.3. Utilization of the FAR Quick Reference Guide. The FAR will comply with the checklist and maintain a detailed, daily log of events found in the FAR Quick Reference Guide.

13.3.7.3.1. Upon completion of FAR duties, the FAR will complete the After Action Report, also found in the FAR Quick Reference Guide, to identify areas of concern for the family, lessons learned, and other process improvements related to the performance of FAR duties (i.e. shifts in family dynamics, FAR training and preparation, outstanding issues, etc.). The FAR will turn in all paperwork associated with the FAR Quick Reference Guide in to the MO to be included in the mortuary case file.

13.3.8. When the FAR should seek assistance. There are numerous situations that may arise that the FAR is not able to adequately address. For example, the needs of the FAR or family become too great to handle without additional assistance; unforeseen situations arise which prevent the FAR from being able

to adequately continue their duties and responsibilities; the duty becomes too emotionally taxing for the FAR, etc. In such cases, the FAR should contact his or her commander and/or the installation MO, for guidance.

13.3.9. FAR duties not authorized. FARs will not be responsible for personally performing the following types of assistance:

13.3.9.1. Counsel. Grief, bereavement or other types of counseling are not the FARs area of expertise. Rather, the FAR will alert the MO that such care is needed or requested at the local level. The MO may consult with the AF Families Forever (AFFF) program manager to determine available resources for family members who are not eligible for military benefits (i.e. are not in DEERS and do not have access to military support networks).

13.3.9.2. Sign documents or make legal decisions. The FAR will never make funeral or memorial service arrangements, or sign any documents on behalf of the PADD/PNOK.

13.3.9.3. Perform misc. chores. Housekeeping, cleaning, babysitting, cooking or other household chores should not be performed by the FAR. The FAR should instead coordinate assistance from unit volunteers or other support elements to meet these needs.

13.3.9.4. Provide transportation in their POV. All efforts will be made to utilize a GOV or rental vehicle for the transport of family members to military offices or appointments, and only if requested by the family.

13.3.9.5. Handle media requests. If the family receives requests from media for interviews, etc. the FAR will seek the assistance of the installation Public Affairs office for support and advice concerning the handling of the press.

13.3.9.6. Make promises or commitments. A FAR should never put themselves in the position of making promises or commitments, and should always consult leadership when in doubt. They should seek assistance from SMEs who will provide answers to questions raised by family members.

13.3.10. When a FAR Should Terminate Services. The general timeline for a FAR to fulfill his or her duties is approximately two weeks from the date of death, this allows time for funeral services and the installation memorial service, if held, to be completed, and benefits counseling accomplished.

13.3.10.1. There are cases when a FAR may be required to be available for longer periods of time, such as when an investigation is pending completion, or in complex cases where extra assistance is needed. Even then, contact with the family may be intermittent and by phone.

13.3.10.2. The duration of the FAR assignment will be determined by the Installation MO, who will then send the Completion of FAR duties letter, found on the AFMAO CoP, to the affected PADD/PNOK. Before the FAR discontinues his or her services or outreach, he or she will ensure that this letter has been mailed.

13.3.10.3. When the FAR duties are completed, the FAR should ensure that they refer the PNOK/PADD and other family members receiving support to the AFFF Program Manager (302) 677-2328. The AFFF program will provide a continuum of long-term care and support to address any future concerns the PADD/PNOK or other associated family may have.

13.3.10.4. When the PADD/PNOK declines support. At no time will a FAR impose their support upon a family member. If support is not desired, the FAR will discuss the wishes of the family with the MO,

and then make note in his or her log of events and After Action Report, in accordance with **paragraph 13.3.7.3**.

13.3.4.6.1. The MO will confirm the wishes of the family and record the declined support in the mortuary case file.

13.4. Special Circumstances.

13.4.1. Overview. There are certain circumstances that require additional support beyond that identified to this point in this chapter. The MO will ensure the FAR is available, in person, to support the PADD/PNOK, as applicable, under the following circumstances:

13.4.1.1. PADD geographically separated from the installation of the deceased permanent duty assignment.

13.4.1.1.1. The MO will approve mortuary funding for travel orders for the FAR to travel to support the PADD for the following circumstances:

13.4.1.1.2. To the location of the PADD to provide direct support and marshal assistance. If the PADD is other than the PNOK, the FAR will ensure daily contact with the PNOK to address their requirements of assistance, unless support is declined as outlined in **paragraph 13.2.10.4**. or the unit commander may appoint another FAR to provide assistance to the PNOK. If a second FAR is appointed, they will ensure daily coordination with each other to ensure continuity in the message conveyed with all affected family.

13.4.1.1.3. Be present for the delivery of the Personal Property/Personal Effects, if requested to be present by the Person Eligible to Receive Effects (PERE). The Mortuary Officer will need to advise the FAR, when this support is requested by the PERE and coordinates with the Summary Courts Officer to ensure the FAR is presence for delivery.

13.4.1.2. Deaths Occurring in Theaters of Combat Operations. In cases where an Airman dies in a declared Combat Theater of Operations and the remains are returned through Dover AFB, DE, there are key responsibilities for a FAR that do not exist in other deaths:

13.4.1.2.1. FAR assignment for a Dignified Transfer (DT). When a FAR is assigned to a family where the PNOK elects travel to Dover AFB to witness the DT of a fallen Airman, the FAR is authorized and expected to travel with the family or if geographically separated, meet the family upon arrival in the Dover AFB area. In this case, it is essential that the FAR be assigned and trained expediently prior to travel.

13.4.1.2.2. FAR travel to Dover AFB. AFMAO/MA will arrange travel for the family and FAR. If the FAR and family are geographically co-located, the FAR will coordinate travel for he/she, along with the family, to the airport. If the FAR and family are geographically separated, the FAR should meet the family at a connecting airport if possible. In the latter case, the FAR needs to locate the family and remain with them for the rest of the journey to DAFB. The FAR will be responsible for handling interactions with airport staff and communication with AFMAO/MA, if complications arise. The FAR will contact the AFMAO/MA case manager prior to departure to ensure communication is established to seamlessly complete the trip to Dover AFB from area airports or address issues that may arise during travel.

13.4.1.2.3. FAR responsibilities while at Dover AFB. While at Dover AFB, the FAR will attend to the family's needs to the extent desired by the family. The FAR will not act as an intermediary between the family and AFMAO staff. The FAR will be required to transport families within the local area for meals

and other needs with a government vehicle provided by AFMAO, as available. The FAR must have a Government driver's license and a state-issued civilian driver's license in his or her possession. The FAR will be directed by AFMAO for further requirements as they arise on a case-by-case basis.

13.4.1.2.4. Duty Status – Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN)/Missing in Action (MIA). A FAR may be assigned, at the discretion of the installation MO, in cases where the whereabouts of a member is unknown, or determined to be missing in action or detained. The FAR, in these cases, may be present as the family is provided the most up-to-date information, as well as provide support as needed.

Tips on Interacting with Grieving Families

Dealing with grieving families can present several intense and difficult challenges. You want to help but don't know what to say. You see their sadness and perhaps have overwhelming feelings of sadness yourself. Here are a couple of guidelines you may find useful for yourself and others.

First do no harm. When people are distressed, shocked, have suffered a terrible loss, they are numbed, but in some ways highly sensitized to their surroundings and other people. Additionally, families of the fallen are in completely foreign environment and are interacting with complete strangers. Emotional and with lowered defenses, they are vulnerable and you are probably seeing them at one of the worst moments in their life.

Anything you do is potentially noticeable. Sometimes it's a small detail that stands out that normally wouldn't have mattered in the least under different circumstances. Anything that seems off schedule, incomplete, or insensitive may be considered offensive. The wrong uniform detail, a late official's arrival, an offhanded discussion between two staff in the hallway about the party last weekend, and especially laughter... people remember these things. They are perceived as adding insult to injury. Try to remember this as a guiding principle to avoid doing something inadvertently offensive, or helping to cushion the blow if someone else does something insensitive.

Second, knowing exactly what to say is not particularly important, believe it or not. Observe how the family or individuals are reacting and then meet them where they are. This will help guide you in how to interact with them and address their immediate needs. Remember, the most significant thing you can do is to be present, attentive, and be emotionally available to the extent that you are able to hold space for that person. People who have lost a loved one learn very quickly that people avoid looking them in the eye, or even avoid them all together because they simply don't know what to say and feel inadequate. One of the best things you can do beyond showing compassion is to make eye contact, to smile, to display the warmth of real human emotion.

Here are some things to say you can say: "I am very sorry for your loss." "My condolences to you and your family." Here are some things to not say: "It will get better," "He's in a better place" or "You've got your whole life ahead of you."

Try to 1) be direct, 2) be sincere, 3) be respectful - this is how we all want to be treated, or would want our families to be treated when it's our turn (remember - none of us get out of this alive - we're all going to experience death somehow - it's a matter of circumstances and timing)

Thirdly, and above all, "know thyself." These are painful waters...it will affect you. It may stir up your own grief experiences - resolved or not. Think about these things before you are exposed. Just like other types of trauma, you are vulnerable to the effects of this exposure and each exposure is a "risk" in terms of psychological trauma.

Don't let yourself become traumatized. Talk to friends, co-workers, your family, a chaplain, etc. Don't isolate yourself. Don't get in too deep - take breaks, get sleep, eat healthy, surround yourself with as many positive influences as possible. In other words, be RESILIENT! This is a marathon, not a sprint. The more functional you stay, the better it will be for yourself, your family, and those in need.

Lastly, what others feel may or may not be similar to what you've felt/feel. When appropriate, you might share similar experience or feeling - although generally, as a rule you should avoid doing this unless you feel a special affinity with the person. It's only appropriate if the sharing is for THEIR benefit, not yours.

The fallen warrior process means being part of someone's catastrophic event. You can do it with grace and perhaps help sooth their pain in the short term. Your role is to support, inform, and facilitate; the family members need it, and there are not many others who can provide what you can right now.