

Survivors find easier access to Army installations

By Susan A. Merkner, IMCOM Public Affairs Office 11 March 2020



Gold Star family members place roses at the base of a wreath during the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument dedication ceremony at Guice Veterans Memorial Park in Biloxi, Miss., Nov. 23, 2019. (Photo Credit: Kemberly Groue)

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SAN ANTONIO, Texas -- Certain Gold Star and next-of-kin survivors are expected to find it easier to visit Army installations since a new process went into effect in January.

The new survivor's access policy allows qualified survivors to get through gate security more easily and travel on post without an escort to attend events, view memorials, receive services and similar activities using their survivor's access card.

"The Army values people, especially our Gold Star spouses and family members," said Lt. Gen. Douglas Gabram, commanding general, U.S. Army Installation Management Command. "This change allows them to more easily receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled, and helps them stay connected to the Army."

Eligible survivors are those who meet the criteria to receive the Gold Star lapel button or Gold Star Next-of-Kin Lapel Button, including widow or widower, parent, child, stepchild, child through adoption, brother, half-brother, sister and half-sister.

Eligible survivors may apply for and receive a survivor's access card through the Army's Automated Installation Entry system at their local garrison. Installations without AIE will use DA Form 1602 for survivor's access.

Among the services available to Gold Star spouses and next-of-kin family members is the Army Survivor Outreach Services program, which provides dedicated and comprehensive support through a network of civilians serving as advocates for survivors. SOS staff can help survivors to access benefits available to them at their local installation, such as career and financial counseling.

To track survivors' feedback on the new process, the Interactive Customer Evaluation survey added new questions to help determine customer satisfaction with outreach efforts.

"The Army honors our surviving Family members by ensuring their access to our installations and Army-led joint bases," said IMCOM Provost Marshal Col. Kevin A. Comfort.

IMCOM is directing policy compliance and training for its 75 garrisons and installations.

The new process resulted from Section 626 of Public Law 115-232, the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. The law recognizes survivors as having a valid requirement for long-term, unescorted access to Army installations.

Survivor's access cards will be consistent across the Army and will be valid for three years. DOD leaders are determining policy to provide reciprocity for survivor's cards across all services.