

Army Community Service (ACS) Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) Report

What is the SOS Program?

The Army Community Service's (ACS) Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) Program provides the long term support phase of the Army casualty continuum of care. It is designed to assist families of deceased Service members adapt to their loss and ensure they continue to be a part of the Army Family for as long as they desire. SOS is a total-force program delivered by the Active Component, the Army National Guard, and the US Army Reserve closest to where the Survivor lives, regardless of component, place, or manner of death of the Service member.

How Does the SOS Program Work?

SOS Support Coordinators and Financial Counselors strive to promote resilience and foster Survivor well-being across time. The SOS program services and support can help Survivors adapt to their grief, including those experiencing complicated grief.

Complicated grief is an intense and more lengthy grieving process that can result in functional impairment -- complicated grief can result in long-term negative psychological, social, occupational, and physical health consequences. Civilian survivors closely associated with the deceased have been found to experience grief at even higher rates.

To mitigate these negative effects, SOS offers surviving family members with social support, financial counseling, and assistance with behavioral health and resilience. The SOS program :



Program Effectiveness

In 2015, the Army Public Health Command and the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) collaborated to assess SOS for program effectiveness.

Statistics from this evaluation show that 74% of Survivors not receiving SOS experience complicated grief, as compared to only 61% of those who participate in the program – a 13% improvement.



Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA)

After completing the impact analysis, the Clearinghouse conducted a CBA of SOS by comparing the monetary benefits associated with preventing complicated grief (e.g., through increased productivity or avoidance of costly mental health services).



Outcomes with economic benefits included the following:

- prevention of suicide
- lost productivity
- costs associated with depression

Program effectiveness estimates were combined with costs to determine cost effectiveness for achieving certain outcomes along with the potential costs generated or saved through the program. Results indicated that costs saved or generated by SOS exceeded the cost of program delivery - a positive return-on investment (ROI).

Program Effectiveness & CBA Results

- For every 100 recipients of SOS there are about 13 fewer cases of complicated grief.
- The net benefit of SOS is about \$1.59 for every dollar invested.
- SOS has a 77% chance of producing a ROI to society.

Recommendations for Program Improvement

- Provide continuous and targeted SOS messaging using social and digital media to grow program awareness and participation.
- Standardize financial counseling across SOS; if implemented and found effective, the ROI would likely increase significantly.
- Regularly collect ongoing SOS quality assurance data, using qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess customer feedback and improve SOS program delivery.

Key Messages

The full report, entitled, "Army Community Service Survivor Outreach Services Cost-Benefit Analysis Report," is available by contacting the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State.

- Along with the Army's dedication to supporting surviving families, there are also practical considerations for promoting healthy grieving processes and healthy functioning of Survivors.
- Inattention to the issues surrounding bereavement can be costly to surviving families, the Army, and society.
- The successful prevention of complicated grief by SOS leads to healthier outcomes in the lives of surviving families.
- If other SOS outcomes could be targeted for evaluation in future efforts (i.e., increased financial well-being), an even greater ROI would be anticipated.
- The demonstrated effectiveness of the Army's SOS, and the associated positive ROI for society creates a win-win for both.