

Survivor Income Map

STUDENT HANDOUT

Module 5 planning tool: what income stops, what continues, and who must be contacted.

Course rule: A retirement income plan is not complete until the survivor knows which payments continue, which stop, and which accounts need action.

1. Map the Survivor Income Sources

Income or account	Who pays or holds it?	What happens at death?	Action needed	Notes for family
Military retired pay	DFAS	Retiree pay stops at death	Report death; ask about final pay and the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)	
Survivor Benefit Plan annuity	DFAS	May pay eligible beneficiary if elected	Confirm election, base amount, beneficiary	Generally taxable to survivor
Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC)	VA	May pay if death is service-connected	Contact VSO or VA; gather records	Tax-free VA benefit
Social Security survivor benefit	SSA	May replace or exceed current benefit	Call SSA; compare survivor vs. own benefit	Eligibility and timing matter
Thrift Savings Plan / IRA / 401(k)	Custodian	Goes by beneficiary designation	Confirm primary and contingent beneficiaries	Beneficiary form can override will
Life insurance	Insurer	Death benefit to named beneficiary	Locate policy and claim form	Check SGLI, VGLI, VA Life, private policies
Bank / brokerage accounts	Financial institution	Depends on joint ownership, POD, TOD, trust	Confirm titles, beneficiaries, trusted contact	
Civilian pension / annuity	Employer or insurer	Depends on survivor election	Find pension election paperwork	Some payments stop at death

2. Three Numbers My Survivor Should Know

Current monthly household income _____

Estimated survivor monthly income _____

Monthly bills that continue _____

Use estimates for class. Verify later with DFAS, VA, SSA, custodians, and a qualified advisor.

3. First Calls After Death

DFAS / retired pay _____

VA / VSO _____

SSA _____

Financial advisor / attorney _____

Facilitator guidance

No single answer is expected. A complete student response should identify at least one payment that stops, one possible survivor payment, one account controlled by beneficiary form, and one agency or professional the family should contact before making decisions.

Sources checked for Spring 2026 delivery: DFAS Survivor Benefit Plan and Arrears of Pay guidance; VA 2026 DIC rates; SSA survivor benefits; OPM/TSP order-of-precedence guidance. Education only.

Consult DFAS, VA, SSA, plan custodians, an attorney, or a qualified advisor for personal decisions.

VUB Financial Readiness Course