

Sacramento Police Department
Critical Incident Management Response Manual



LINE OF DUTY DEATH OR INJURY POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction for the Sacramento Police Department to provide appropriate emotional care for the seriously injured, ill or deceased employee's family.

Although the policy is intended to address the line-of-duty death or injury of police officers, many provisions, including death notification and family assistance, may be applicable to any agency employee regardless of whether or not the death is duty related.

II. POLICY

It shall be the responsibility of the Sacramento Police Department to provide liaison assistance to the primary family of an officer who dies in the line-of-duty or who is hospitalized for an indefinite period of time or requires repeated and/or intermittent hospitalization because of a line-of-duty injury or systematic illness incurred while on duty. This assistance shall include, but is not limited to, the clarification and comprehensive study of survivor benefits and emotional support during this traumatic period for the surviving family.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Line-of-duty Death:* Any action, felonious or accidental, which claims the life of a Sacramento Police Officer who is performing work related functions either while on or off-duty.
- B. *Line-of-duty Injury or Illness:* For the purposes of this policy, a line-of-duty injury or illness shall be an injury or systemic illness serious enough that hospitalization or time away from the department is ordered by a physician for an indefinite period.
- C. *Survivors:* Primary family members of the injured or deceased officer, including spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, siblings, fiancé, and/or significant others and domestic partners.
- D. *Beneficiary:* Those designated by the officer as recipients of specific death benefits.
- E. *Benefits:* Financial payments made to the family to assist with financial stability following the loss of a loved one.
- F. *Funeral Payments:* Financial payments made to the surviving families of an officer killed in the line-of-duty which are specifically earmarked for funeral expenses.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Officer in Charge (OIC)

1. In order to prevent duplication of efforts, maintain order, and ensure that the process works for the benefit of the officer or his or her family, the OIC shall oversee all departmental functions regarding the incident. When possible, the OIC shall be the Captain of the Personnel Services Division (PSD) or the Captain in the Office of the Chief (OOC). The lieutenant or designees of the PSD shall be assigned if a captain is not available.
2. The OIC shall make assignments of tasks and responsibilities to department personnel, including the Employee Services Unit (Peer Support). Those persons shall report the status of their tasks to the OIC. Department personnel shall not perform incident related tasks without the approval of the OIC unless exigent circumstances exist.
3. Personnel appointed to the position of OIC shall be thoroughly familiar with the concept and procedures of the Employee Services Unit / Peer Support Unit and other internal and/or external organizations involved in the process.
4. In the event the officer has multiple families and/or an adversarial relationship exists between the families, the OIC may assign a separate liaison for each family.

B. Death or Life Threatening Injury Notification - Family

1. The notification plan will be formulated using the most recent confidential Line-of-Duty Death or Injury information provided by the officer.
2. If there is knowledge of a medical condition with the primary survivor, medical personnel will be dispatched for standby near the residence to coincide with the notification along with the notifying personnel.
3. Notification will always be made by two or more persons. The Chief of Police, his representative, and/or pre-selected persons of the officer's choice will notify the family if time to assemble these persons exists. It is recommended that a Peer Support team member be either part of the notification team or readily available to assist the notification employees and/or family members. Delays in developing the appropriate notification team must be weighed against the importance of the timely notification of the primary family.

Notification shall be done *in person, in a timely manner, in pairs when possible, in plain language and with compassion.*

- a. The Chief of Police (or designee) will form the lead notification detail.

- b. The following persons may be included in the notification detail (no more than three managers):
 - 1) Chief of Police (or his designee)
 - 2) Management
 - a. Deputy Chief
 - b. Area Captain
 - c. Other Captain
 - 5) Employee Services Unit or designated Peer Support Member
 - 6) Other: SPOA, Another Officer, Friend
See Injured Officer Checklist
 - 7) Chaplaincy
 - c. If the above suggested persons are not readily accessible, notification can be made (with approval of a Deputy Chief or Chief of Police) by the Area Captain or Watch Commander. The opportunity to get the family to the hospital prior to the demise of the officer is significantly more important than who delivers the notification.
 - d. If the family wishes to go to the hospital, they may be transported via Department vehicle. It is highly recommended the family not drive themselves to the hospital.
 - e. If the primary survivors are not in close proximity to the City of Sacramento or not in a reasonable driving distance, the OIC shall request personal notification from a public safety agency from their locale. The OIC is permitted to assist in making transportation arrangements to Sacramento.
4. Death notifications shall be in person – not by telephone. As soon as most public safety families are unexpectedly contacted by SPD management, they will generally assume harm has occurred to their loved one.
- a. Prior to arrival, determine who will be the primary speaker.
 - b. Ask to be admitted to the house. Do not make notification on the doorstep.
 - c. Gather everyone in the home and ask them to sit down.
 - d. Inform them slowly and clearly of the information you have on the incident.
 - e. Use plain language. Survivors are served best when they are told directly what occurred.
 - 1) Begin by saying, “I have some very bad news to tell you” or something similar.
 - 2) Avoid vague expressions (passed away, did not make it). Use the word “died”.
 - 3) There are few consoling words that survivors find helpful, but it is always appropriate to say, “I am sorry this happened”.

- f. It is important to use the officer's name during the notification. Do not refer use the word "body".
5. If the officer has already died, relay that information. Do not give the family a false sense of hope.
6. Notifying personnel must be prepared for unexpected responses from survivors to include hysteria and possible verbal or physical attack, anger, fainting, shock, etc.
7. Notifying personnel must be prepared to stay with the family as long as needed. This consideration should be made when determining who will be on the notification team.
8. Notifying personnel must be reassuring to the survivors. The most acceptable comment to newly bereaved people is something such as, "I'm so sorry this has happened," and "The Sacramento Police Department will do everything we can to help you through this."
 - a. The moment of notification is one that most people remember very vividly for the rest of their life. SPD presence and compassion are critical to a death notification.
 - b. Do not take a victim's personal items with you at the time of notification. Survivors often need time to be able to accept these items. Preferably, make arrangements to return these items at a later time or be sure to advise survivors how to recover the officer's items if they are in the custody of the police department.
9. Always leave a list of key phone numbers with the survivors. These numbers can be provided by Peer Support but should include a direct contact to the Police Department.
10. Establish a Peer Support Liaison with the family prior to leaving. The Liaison will be responsible for ensuring SPD support and coordination of resources.

C. Death Notification in the Work Place

1. Survivors often must be notified at their own place of work. Follow the basic notification procedures described above: *in person, in a timely manner, in pairs, in plain language, with compassion.*
 - a. Ask to speak to the manager or supervisor and ask if the person to be notified is available. It is not necessary to divulge any details regarding the purpose of your visit.
 - b. Ask the manager or supervisor to arrange for a private room in which to make the notification.
 - c. Allow the survivor time to react and offer your support.

- d. Transport the survivor to his or her home, or to view the body, if necessary.
- e. Do not allow the survivor to drive him or herself.
- f. Let the survivor determine what he or she wishes to tell the manager or supervisor regarding the death. Offer to make additional notifications within the survivor's workplace if necessary.

D. Death or Life Threatening Injury Notification – Departmental

1. In the event of an on-duty death or life threatening injury to an officer, notification to other departmental personnel shall be made.
 - a. It is imperative that death notifications are not made via police radios unless absolutely necessary. If unavoidable, notification should only state that there has been a death.
 - b. At the earliest convenience, the COP or his designee shall send a department wide email notifying personnel of the death and any releasable information. This email should be a supplement to a personal notification to officers and employees by their command staff. This shall not be done prior to notifying the family of the deceased or injured officer.
 - c. A management page shall be sent at the appropriate time to ensure all command employees are aware of the situation.
 - d. The area Captains or their designee shall attend the next scheduled patrol roll call briefings to answer any questions. Peer Support and Chaplains shall also be available at these roll calls and the stations for support purposes.

E. Assisting the Family at the Hospital

1. Arrangements regarding appropriate waiting facilities for the family and fellow police officers are outlined in the Peer Support Manual.
2. The Sergeant of the Employee Services Unit or their designee (generally another Peer Support member) shall be assigned as the Hospital Liaison.
3. The Hospital Liaison (HL) acts as a liaison for medical personnel to the family of the officer and fellow police officers. If the HL is not a Peer Support Team Member, it is strongly recommended that they utilize a Peer who has a rapport with emergency personnel and practices. If the HL is not a Peer Support Team Member, then one will be readily available to respond to the hospital to assist with the family of the officer.
4. In the case that an officer is critically injured, the HL will be assigned to the hospital full time while the officer is in an ICU department in the hospital. Upon moving to a recovery room or regular room, the HL or his/her designee will determine staffing at the hospital.

5. The duties of the HL include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. The HL will ensure the family is updated as soon as they arrive at the hospital.
 - b. The HL will ensure that pertinent information on the officer's condition is relayed on a timely basis. A determination regarding how or if this information is disseminated will be coordinated by the OIC and management team. The HL will also notify the OIC of the officer's condition and room location. The OIC and management team will make a determination about how this information will be shared with the Department.
 - c. The HL and/or OIC shall also make the family and fellow employees aware of hospital policy about visitation with the injured officer and/or visitation with the body following the demise.
 - d. If the officer is coherent, he/she or their designee shall inform the HL of their wishes regarding visitation, phone calls, etc. The wishes of the officer, immediate family, and/or designee shall be the utmost priority of the department.
 - e. The HL shall establish a "down room" or designated waiting area within the hospital for department employees to wait if they wish to visit. This shall be coordinated with hospital staff and be separate from any other general waiting areas.
 - f. The HL will be responsible for monitoring visitors. The HL will maintain the hospital supply case (outlined in Peer Support Manual) as well as maintaining the journal for the officer.
 - g. The HL shall coordinate with the Employee Services Unit regarding additional staffing at the hospital to fulfill these or other necessary functions to include Chaplains and Peer Support Members.
 - h. Continual updates shall be communicated to the OIC.
6. If the injuries to the officer are likely fatal and it is possible for the family to visit their officer prior to death, they should be afforded the opportunity. There is a definite need to touch and hold the body while there is still life, and being present when death occurs can be comforting to the family.
7. If the officer has died and is in the hospital, it shall be the survivor's choice to view the body.
 - a. It may be necessary to prepare the survivor of the officer's physical condition prior to them viewing the body.
8. Any promises, such as, "We'll promote him/her posthumously," or, "We'll retire his/her badge", shall not be made to the family by any person except the Chief of Police.
9. The HL or his/her designee will make arrangements for transportation of the family back to their residence or other desired reasonable destination.

F. Death or Life Threatening Injury Notification - Media

1. The name of the injured or deceased officer will be released by the PIO or another person designated by the Chief of Police only after notification of the primary family members (Refer to G.O. 360.01 / Media Relations Policy).
 - a. The Captain of the Office of the Chief (OOC) will:
 - 1) Coordinate a press conference;
 - 2) Prepare an Internal Communications Briefing Sheet with input from the Captain or designee from the Office of Investigations.
2. There will be 2 Public Information Officers (PIO) for the press conference.
3. The Chief of Police shall conduct the press conference. The following SPD personnel will attend (in full uniform) the initial press conference if possible:
 - a. Chief of Police
 - b. Deputy Chiefs
 - c. Area Captain
 - d. Captain of Investigations
 - e. Public Information Officer (preferably two)
4. An additional press conference may be necessary and the following guidelines shall be followed:
 - a. The PIO(s) will provide a briefing packet for media with officer names and timeline (if applicable).
 - b. The Captain of OOC or designee will develop speaking points for the City Council and Mayor, and/or City Management.
 - c. If the C.O.P. is absent or unavailable, the Deputy Chief of the Office of Operations will take over. If the DC of OOO is not in attendance, the D.C. of OTS will conduct the briefing.
 - d. If an outside agency is involved, the PIO will obtain a pre-agreement regarding media releases.
 - e. The pre-scripted speaking points shall be outlined for various critical incidents.
5. The following will attend (in full uniform) the additional press conference if available:
 - a. Chief of Police
 - b. Deputy Chiefs
 - c. Captains
 - d. Mayor (invited)

- e. Council Members (invited)
- f. City Manager (invited)
- g. SPOA or their representatives
- h. Outside Department Heads if agency is involved in incident

G. Support for the family after the incident, at a Funeral, and post-event support.

1. The Captain of PSD will coordinate and/or oversee the needs of the family with the assistance of the Employee Services Unit / Peer Support (Refer to *Funeral Procedures Manual*).
2. Unless the family requests otherwise, Peer Support Members (as directed by the Peer Support Coordinator), will act as the liaison for the family. Although the liaison should know the deceased officer and be aware of family relationships, the liaison should not be someone so emotionally involved with the loss that he or she would become ineffective. The duties of the liaison shall include but are not limited to the following:

Note: If the incident is the line-of-duty death of a police officer, funeral arrangements are to be decided by the family of the officer with their wishes taking precedence over those of the agency.

- a. Ensure the needs of the family come before the wishes of the department.
- b. Meet with the family and relate the duties of the liaison or allow the family to designate the person, if appropriate, they wish to perform the tasks.
- c. Meet with the family regarding funeral arrangements.
 - 1) Since many officers have not prearranged their wishes for the handling of their own funeral, the family will most likely need to decide upon all aspects of the funeral.
 - 2) The department should make the family aware of what they can offer in the way of assistance if the family decides to have a Line-Of-Duty funeral.
- d. The liaison will be provided with a cell phone (if they do not already have one) to facilitate an immediate line of communication among all personnel involved.
- e. The liaison should become familiar with all information concerning the death and the continuing investigation in order to answer family questions.
- f. The liaison will be constantly available to the family throughout this traumatic process. It may be necessary to have two liaisons for a prolonged event.
- g. The liaison will ensure surviving family members or close family friends are afforded recognition and will have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and funeral procession.

- h. If the funeral is a Line-Of-Duty funeral, the liaison will ensure the family is briefed on the funeral procedures including the 21-gun salute, presentation of the flag, playing of taps, etc. The family has the option of excluding any portion of the funeral procedure.
- 3. A command level officer or the Public Information Officer will be designated to handle the media throughout this traumatic ordeal. In the event the family should decide to grant an interview, this officer would attend and offer to screen all questions presented to the family and to guard against jeopardizing upcoming legal proceedings.
- 4. In the event of a line-of-duty death, Peer Support Members will ensure the home is prepared for the influx of visitors following the funeral. Food and babysitting may be provided through arrangements made by a designated Peer. Peer Support Members may also offer to remain at the home and screen telephone calls.
- 5. In the event of a line-of-duty death, Peer Support Members or another agency designee will provide to the family a list of churches with seating capacities large enough to accommodate attendance at the funeral.
- 6. In the event of a line-of-duty death, department vehicles and drivers will be made available to the family if they desire transportation to and from the funeral site(s).
- 7. In the event of a Line-of-Duty death, Peer Support Members will be responsible for providing the family access to other public safety survivors or other support groups to include but not limited to Concerns of Police Survivors, Survivors of Homicide Victims, Compassionate Friends, Parents of Murdered Children, etc. (Resources will be made available by the Employee Services Unit).
- 8. The Sacramento Police Department will send Peer Support Members or other officers on routine residence checks by the officer's or survivors' home for as long as is reasonable following the incident. If the residence in question is outside a reasonable driving distance, arrangements will be made to have the respective law enforcement agency do a courtesy check of the residence. This procedure will be discussed with the officer and or family and will not be conducted if they wish otherwise.
- 9. In the case that media is present at the officer's residence, the OIC will coordinate with the Watch Commander to provide security and protection for the family's privacy.

H. Providing Information and Assistance Regarding Benefits to the Surviving Family in the Event of a Line-of-Duty Death.

1. A Peer Support Member with the assistance of the PSD Captain or other designated benefits officer will gather information regarding all department association, state and federal benefits available to the surviving family.
2. A benefits officer should visit with the surviving family to discuss the benefits within a few days following the funeral. A prepared printout of the benefit payments due to the family, listing named beneficiaries (with permission from the family), contacts at various benefit offices and the process that needs to be completed to receive benefits should be given to the family. This same explanation should be repeated within a month following the funeral since the initial contact is clouded by the emotional numbness of the family during the first benefits meeting. Assistance for the filing of benefit claims will be provided to the family.
3. If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children may also receive a printout of benefits to which the child or children are entitled.
4. The benefits officer should pay special attention to the problems with possible revocation of health benefits to the surviving family. Additional options for health insurance should be provided to the family.

I. Providing Departmental Support During Criminal Legal Proceedings

1. If criminal proceedings occur after the death, the family will be informed of all developments prior to any press release when possible.
 - a. This shall be the responsibility of the Investigations Captain or their designee to notify Peer Support or the liaison to the family.
2. If there are not any court proceedings surrounding the circumstances of the officer's death, the department will relay that information to the surviving family as soon as it becomes known.

J. Providing Extended and Follow-up Support

1. Peer Support members will encourage and assist the family with obtaining Peer Support and/or professional counseling services. This includes arranging Employee Assistance Benefits when possible.
2. It is of paramount importance to help the primary surviving family maintain a relationship with the agency if they desire. To that end, the following suggestions are made:
 - a. The Employee Services Unit or Peer Support designees should schedule follow-up visits with the primary surviving family for at least two years following the line-of-duty death.

- b. The Employee Services Unit will ensure primary family members are invited to all memorial services or other agency functions deemed appropriate.
 - c. The Employee Services Unit will provide the primary family members with information from organizations such as Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) and other recognized police survivor organizations.
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