

**SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
PROBATION DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE**

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH/CATASTROPHIC INJURY

Authority:

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Purpose:

This order establishes procedures to ensure the proper support and emotional care for an officer's family following a Line-Of-Duty Death or catastrophic injury.

The department will provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors, spouse, domestic partner, parent(s), siblings, and dependent(s) of an officer who dies in the line of duty or suffers a catastrophic injury. This assistance is provided whether the death/injury was felonious or accidental (i.e., automobile accident, training accident) while the officer was performing a department-related function and while he or she was an active officer of the department. The Chief Probation Officer or designee may institute certain parts of this order for cases of an officer's natural death or off duty death. The department will also provide clarification and comprehensive study of survivor benefits as well as emotional support during this traumatic period of readjustment for the surviving family. Funeral arrangements for the deceased officer are to be decided by the family, with their wishes taking precedence.

Coordination of events following the Line-Of-Duty Death or catastrophic injury of a peace officer is an extremely important and complex responsibility. Professionalism and compassion must be exhibited at all times as an obligation to the officer's survivors, department employees, and to the law enforcement community. In order to provide the best possible services and support for the officer's family, specific tasks shall be assigned as follows:

- Peer Support Team: A team of trained employees who shall offer assistance and appropriate support during Line-of-Duty Death or catastrophic injury to the employee or family unit.
- Benefits Coordinator: A fiscal or payroll manager who has the department's full support to fulfill this responsibility to the survivors.

An explanation of their duties is contained in the responsibilities section of this procedure. An officer may be called upon to perform more than one role.

Responsibilities:

- I. Officers: Probation Corrections Officer(PCO), Probation Officer(PO)I/II/III, Probation Corrections Supervisor (PCS)I/II, and Supervising Probation Officer (SPO):
 - A. Shall update and maintain the emergency contact form annually.
- II. Peer Support Team
 - A. The Chief Probation Officer (CPO) or designee may personally make the notification or designate the Peer Support Team who will notify the survivors of an officer who has suffered severe injuries or death.
 - B. This notification shall always be made in teams, preferably male and female, and not alone.

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH/CATASTROPHIC INJURY

- C. If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate survivor, medical personnel should be available at the residence at the time of notification.
- D. The name of the deceased officer should not be released by the department before the immediate family is notified.
- E. The Chief Probation Officer or designee, chaplain, close friend, or another survivor may appropriately accompany the Peer Support Team to make the notification. However, if the aforementioned persons are not readily accessible, notification shall not be delayed. If there is an opportunity to get to the hospital prior to the demise of the officer, the Peer Support Team should not wait for the delegation to gather. The family should learn of the death from the department first and not from the press or other sources.
- F. An officer should avoid making a death notification on the doorstep but rather, ask to be admitted into the house. The Peer Support Team should inform family members slowly and clearly of the information that is available. If specifics of the incident are known, the Peer Support Team should relay as much information as possible to the family, using the officer's name during the notification. If the officer has died, that information should be immediately relayed. An officer should not give the family a false sense of hope. The officer should use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away."
- G. If the family requests to visit the hospital, they should be transported by a department vehicle. It is highly recommended the family not drive themselves to the hospital. If the family insists on driving, a member of the Peer Support Team should request to accompany them in the family car.
- H. If young children are at home, the Peer Support Team should arrange for babysitting needs. This may involve co-workers, spouses, transportation of children to a relative's home, or similar arrangements.
- I. The deceased or severely injured officer's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification whenever possible.
- J. If immediate survivors live beyond the San Bernardino metropolitan area, the Peer Support Team should, with approval from the Chief Probation Officer or designee, ensure that arrangement of a personal notification is made with appropriate jurisdiction.
- K. The Peer Support Team should remain at the hospital while the family is present. If the media has obtained the officer's name, they will be advised by the Peer Support Team to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin and refer the media to the Probation Information Officer (PIO), contact telephone number [REDACTED]
- L. The Peer Support Team should act as a hospital liaison. The officers are responsible for coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the officer's family, department officers, and others. Additional responsibilities include:
 - 1. Arranging with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, the Chief Probation Officer, the Peer Support Team, and others requested by the immediate survivors.
 - 2. Arranging a separate area for fellow officers to assemble.
 - 3. Ensuring medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding an officer's condition to the family in a timely basis and before such information is released to others.
 - 4. Notifying the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased officer are directed to the office of Safety and Risk Management. The family should not receive any of these bills at their

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH/CATASTROPHIC INJURY

- residence. This may require the officer to re-contact the hospital during normal business hours to ensure that proper billing takes place.
5. Collect hospital bills sent to the family and forward to them the office of Safety and Risk Management.
 6. Ensuring that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital, and arranging transportation for the family back to their residence.
 7. If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer before death, they should be afforded that opportunity. The Peer Support Team officers should "prepare" the family for what they might see in the emergency room and should accompany the family into the room for the visit if the family requests it.
- M. The Peer Support Team shall assign a liaison to the family. This officer will act as a "facilitator" between the family and the department. When possible, male/female "officer teams" should be utilized. Additional responsibilities include:
1. Ensuring that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the department.
 2. Assisting the family with funeral arrangements and making them aware of what the department can offer if they decide to have a law enforcement funeral. If they choose the latter, briefing the family on funeral procedures is required.
 3. Apprising the family of information concerning the death and investigation of the incident.
 4. Providing as much assistance as possible, including overseeing travel and lodging arrangements for out-of-town family, arranging for food for the family, meeting child care, transportation needs, etc.
 5. Being constantly available to the family when needed.
 6. Determining what public safety, church, fraternal, and labor organizations will provide in terms of financial assistance for out-of-town family that has traveled, food for funeral attendees following the burial, etc.
 7. Notifying Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), (573) 346-4911, which has officers available to provide emotional support to the survivors.
 8. Carrying a department-issued cell phone at all times.
 9. Providing family members with a referral to Counseling Team International if requested.
 10. The Peer Support Team should serve as a long-term liaison with the surviving family to ensure that close contact is maintained between the department and the survivors and their needs are met for as long as they feel the need for support.
 11. If court proceedings do not surround the circumstances of the officer's death, the Peer Support Team should relay all details of the incident findings to the family at the earliest opportunity.
 12. If criminal violations surround the death, the Peer Support Team should:
 - a. Inform the family of all new developments prior to a press release.
 - b. Keep the family apprised of legal proceedings.
 - c. Introduce the family to the Victim Assistance Specialist of the court.
 - d. Encourage the family to attend the trial, and accompany them whenever possible.
 - e. Arrange for investigators if necessary to meet with the family to answer all questions.

III. Benefits Coordinator

- A. The Chief Probation Officer or designee shall assign a Benefits Coordinator to gather information on benefits/funeral payments available to the family. The Benefits Coordinator should be a fiscal or payroll manager who has the department's full support to fulfill this responsibility to the survivors and who is completely responsible for filing the appropriate benefit paperwork and ensures these benefits are being received.
- B. The Benefits Coordinator is responsible for:
 1. Filing Worker's Compensation claims and related paperwork.
 2. Contacting the appropriate county offices without delay to ensure that the beneficiary receives death and retirement benefits, the officer's remaining paychecks, and payment for remaining annual and compensatory time.
 3. Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments, including the Public Safety Officers Benefits Act, that are available to the family.
 4. Setting up any special trust funds or educational funds.
 5. Notifying police organizations such as HEROES, Inc., the Fraternal Order of Police, SEBA, SBCPOA, etc., of the death and ensuring that any and all entitlements are paid to the beneficiary. These agencies may also offer legal and financial counseling to the family at no cost.
 6. Preparing a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that are due to the family, listing named beneficiaries and contacts at various benefits offices, and informing them when they can expect to receive payment.
 7. Meeting with the surviving family a few days after the funeral to discuss the benefits they will receive. A copy of the prepared printout and any other related paperwork should be given to the family at this time.
 8. If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the children may be receiving.
 9. Health Benefits should be reviewed with the family to ensure they are aware that many providers allow a 30-day grace period before canceling or imposing monthly payments upon survivors.
 10. The Benefits Coordinator should meet with the family approximately six months following the incident, to ensure they are receiving benefits.

IV. Chief Probation Officer

- A. It is the responsibility of the Chief Probation Officer or designee to properly, as soon as possible, notify the next of kin of an officer who has suffered severe injuries or death.
- B. The Chief Probation Officer or designee should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with the family as quickly as possible.
- C. The Chief Probation Officer or designee should meet with the officer's family at their home to determine their wishes regarding departmental participation in the preparation of the funeral or services. All possible assistance should be rendered.

V. Assistance for Impacted Officers

- A. Officers who were on scene or who arrived moments after an officer has been critically injured or killed shall be relieved as quickly as possible.
 1. Law Enforcement witnesses and other officers who may have been emotionally impacted by the serious injury or death of another officer shall attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing held by a trained mental health

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH/CATASTROPHIC INJURY

professional from the Counseling Team International, as directed by the department.

2. The Peer Support Team should be available to assist impacted officers on scene, before and after the debriefing, and as needed by officers.
 - a. Peer Supporters are available to offer support and referrals for applicable resources; however, they shall not compromise an internal investigation or criminal investigation in any way.

VI. Continued Support for the Family

- A. Officers of the department must remain sensitive to the needs of the survivors long after the officer's death. The grief process has no timetable. Research indicates that more than half of the surviving spouses can be expected to develop a post-traumatic stress reaction to the tragedy.
- B. Survivors should continue to feel a part of the "probation family." They should be invited to department activities to ensure continued contact.
- D. Officers of the department are encouraged to keep in touch with the family. Close friends, co-workers, and officials should arrange with the family to visit the home from time to time so long as the family expresses a desire to have these contacts.
- E. The Chief Probation Officer or designee should observe the officer's death date with a short note to the family, flowers on the grave, and/or wreath placement at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

Inspections:

Refer to the Policy and Procedure Inspection Matrix

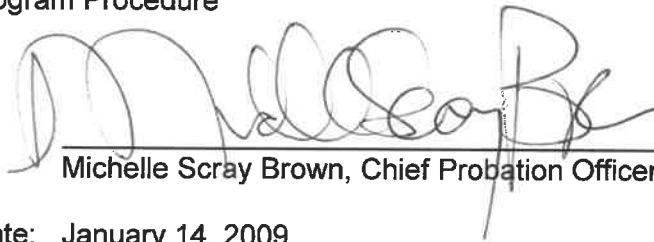
References:

"Support Services to Surviving Families of Line of Duty Deaths," by Suzanne F. Sawyer, the Executive Director of Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. (C.O.P.S.), based in Camdenton, Missouri.

Procedure

Peer Support Program Procedure

Issued by:


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Date

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