



National Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers

# **Officer Suicide Post-Event Guide:** Emerging Issues, Recommendations, and Considerations

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# Officer Suicide Post-Event Guide:

Emerging Issues, Recommendations, and Considerations



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These organizations' contributions and their vast amount of expertise were instrumental in developing this post-event suicide guide. They represented their agencies with dignity and respect. For that, we commend and salute them all.

An officer suicide can add layers of mental and physical stressors to the agency's response. The information provided is based on research and professional experiences and will offer some best practices and considerations for the agency members and function, post-suicide.

This guide also includes survivor stories. These stories validate the vast array of emotions and feelings experienced and how critical it is to support a family-in-blue when a loved one dies by suicide. We especially appreciate these survivors' candor in getting through the death of a loved one by suicide.

We would also like to thank the law enforcement professionals and clinicians who contributed to this guide.

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## FOREWORD

In today's socially and politically conflicted environment, law enforcement is caught between the mandates of the job and the ability to fulfill these mandates. Negative public scrutiny, exposure to trauma, violence, mass murders, riots, unappreciated risks (sometimes risking their lives), coupled with any personal problems in living, all add up to the inability to cope. One can continue in this work and give and give to a point where one can no longer give—something called “compassion fatigue.” A sense of isolation ensues, coupled with frustration, pent-up aggression, and eventual depression further fueled by exposure to trauma, death, abused kids, murder, and human misery. Some officers die by suicide to escape the unendurable psychological pain. At present, we have scientific evidence of the increased risk of suicide among law enforcement. These studies have shown that officers have a significantly higher risk of suicide than other workers in the general population. Using this knowledge as a baseline, future researchers will further develop risk categories among police and find ways to prevent these tragic deaths.

Our first goal should be the prevention and mitigation of suicides in policing. Realistically, attaining such a goal is difficult in a profession where witnessing death, human misery, encountering abused children, and encountering violence at work is commonplace. Given this unvarying work factor, it is best that we strive together to prevent other law enforcement deaths by suicide. Caring and thoughtful post-event policies and actions can help achieve this goal. The question often arises as to what to do after a suicide occurs in a department. This guide offers sound advice on policy suggestions concerning this topic.

Responses after an officer suicide are generally called “postvention.” It is a shortened term for a post-intervention after a death by suicide and includes psychological first aid and crisis intervention.

Many mental health professionals have stated that postvention is suicide prevention. It may prevent future suicides by containing the crisis and lessening the chances for suicide contagion in close-knit groups like law enforcement.

The conceptualization of suicidal behavior as being psychologically “contagious” to those already experiencing emotional distress has been experienced by some law enforcement agencies in the occurrence of suicide clusters.

**POSTVENTION:** An agency’s procedural response to an officer suicide, including, but not limited to, guidance on making notifications to family and coworkers, protocols for funerals, providing counseling and mental health services, messaging in media coverage, and both the training and self-care of those members assigned to these tasks.

**SUICIDE CONTAGION:** A phenomenon in which direct or indirect exposure to a suicide increases the risk or likelihood of suicide among at-risk populations.

Thomas Coghlan, Psy.D.  
Blue Line Psychological Services, PLLC  
(Retired Detective) New York, New York, Police Department

For this reason, a complete postvention protocol should include prevention efforts that recognize and proactively address the risk of suicide contagion.

Officer suicides are events that demand pre-established protocols for an efficient, effective, thoughtful, and compassionate response. In the traumatic shock that follows an officer suicide, decision making can become restricted and short-sighted, thus emphasizing the need for an established postvention protocol that facilitates a seamless, coordinated, and thorough response.

This guide can help leaders and officers take a good look at policy and improve departmental responses to suicide. After all, it is up to us to take care of each other.





## U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

*Bureau of Justice Assistance*

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*Washington, D.C. 20531*

## MESSAGE FROM BJA

Our nation's law enforcement officers embody courage and resilience as they answer difficult calls for service without hesitation. Unfortunately, these calls expose our officers to repeated incidents of crises, danger, and sometimes death, taking a toll on the mental health of our first responders. Seeking help can be difficult for officers because of the stigmatization and the fear of being punished or pulled off duty. However, if left unaddressed, an officer's mental well-being can suffer and can lead to mental illness, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and even suicide.

Today, suicide claims the lives of far too many officers as the numbers continue to outpace line-of-duty deaths. Unfortunately, we cannot prevent every suicide, but we can reduce the number of suicides. Though suicide prevention is incredibly important, agencies must equip themselves with the tools to respond effectively should an officer suicide occur. In addition to the officer's family, an officer suicide affects the entire department, including other officers and the operations of that agency.

Dealing with the tragic loss of an officer is incredibly difficult and making necessary decisions in the immediate aftermath of a suicide can be overwhelming. Having a protocol in place to respond to a law enforcement suicide can assist in minimizing added stress and pain for loved ones, colleagues, and the department.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) believes that the law enforcement community deserves better access to officer wellness resources and suicide prevention strategies. To provide this, we created a multifaceted approach to address law enforcement suicide. BJA's National Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers (SAFLEO) Program, funded under the Officer Robert Wilson III Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) Initiative, strives to address law enforcement wellness and suicide. BJA, through SAFLEO, provides training, technical assistance, and resources to law enforcement agencies, staff, and families to raise awareness, smash the stigma, and reduce and prevent law enforcement suicide.

SAFLEO closely collaborates with the National Officer Safety Initiative (NOSI) National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide (“Consortium”). The Consortium is examining the field of suicide prevention to identify what is being done and where there are gaps to recommend how to more successfully reduce future officer suicides. SAFLEO uses the Consortium’s findings and outcomes to ensure that SAFLEO’s training curriculum and resources include the latest information and strategies in suicide prevention.

Planning and preparation are critical to navigating these unthinkable circumstances. This SAFLEO report, *Officer Suicide Post-Event Guide: Emerging Issues, Recommendations, and Considerations*, serves as a significant resource for agencies who experience the unimaginable tragedy of an officer suicide in their department. Though every experience will be different, this guide provides resources and best practices for handling an officer suicide. We hope that no agency has to endure this tragedy, but if it should occur, the information provided in this guide will offer a plan to help lessen the stressors and recover.

BJA extends our gratitude to all the partners who shared stories of officer suicide or provided critical recommendations for this guide. Suicide awareness is an important topic that needs attention, and this guide could have not been completed without the support of our partners and their invaluable contributions to protecting those who protect us. Stay safe. Be well.

## INTRODUCTION

Suicide among American law enforcement personnel is not a new phenomenon. It has been a leading threat to the lives of our men and women in uniform for decades. However, with the best measures in place and the best intentions, we need to be prepared when an officer death by suicide occurs.

Law enforcement leadership plays a critical role in the post-suicide response. Given the serious nature of death by suicide and the disturbing aftereffects on family, friends, other officers, and the department, leaders must understand what to do should an officer suicide occur in their jurisdiction. There are many questions to be answered. For example, are death notifications different for suicides? How does a leader address the media? Will the funeral protocol be different? How will the department care for survivors? Should there be a departmental debrief? Should officers be afforded referrals to a mental health professional(s), if needed? Is there a possible danger of contagion where other officers may die by suicide? Given the scrutiny of the agency's response to an officer suicide, relying on an informal, unwritten policy is not a prudent approach. (For additional information on the phases of suicide postvention in the workplace, see [A Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace.](#))

This SAFLEO Officer Suicide Post-Event Response Guide is not a one-size-fits-all, fill-in-the-blank template for dealing with the aftermath of an officer suicide. Instead, it is a first-of-its-kind resource that will assist law enforcement executives in developing policies and procedures that best fit their agency's needs. This guide has identified many best practices and standards that exist today. There is no easy answer, but this guide can assist agencies for the unthinkable. This guide provides the information needed to develop an action plan inclusive of the initial response to the scene, the notification process, and funeral planning, while also providing short- and long-term support to the agency and the surviving family.

Often, agencies are unprepared for the sudden death of an officer. Many agencies have plans to deal with a line-of-duty death, but not death by suicide. This failure to prepare for death by suicide may result from the shame and stigma associated with these events. This guide allows agencies to think about how they will prepare now rather than preparing during an actual crisis. It is easier to make critical decisions when not dealing with the emotional storm associated with an officer suicide.

Though some will plan and never have to use this guide, for those that are so unfortunate, we hope this guide will promote post-traumatic growth and healing in the days, months, and years to follow.

This post-event guide is a resource to maneuvering through the difficult times that will lay ahead, a toolkit of considerations and practices to allow your agency's leadership to see what will and will not work. Our hope is that an agency will never need to put these practices into action.

## RESPONDING TO THE SCENE

Treat all officer deaths, including presumed suicide, as suspicious until a formal pronouncement determines the actual cause of death. The scene of an officer suicide can be stressful and highly emotional. Critical decisions can be compromised by the officers who become personally and emotionally engulfed based on the totality of the circumstances they encounter.

As an agency, you have little control over who will be the first officers on the scene. However, you can control who remains and who will be responsible for conducting the suspicious death investigation. Consider developing a policy and memorandum of agreement with another agency to investigate the scene. Having an outside agency process the scene may reduce the emotional impact—those emotionally impacted by the death may question the outcome of the investigation. Having an outside agency or third party assist with the investigation will enhance its overall credibility.

### ON-SCENE PROTOCOLS

The first officers on the scene cannot assume anything, even if the call appears to be a suspected death by suicide. According to *Practical Homicide Investigation*<sup>1</sup>, “all death inquiries should be conducted as homicide investigations until the facts prove differently.” Unfortunately, there are times when relatives and friends simply cannot accept their loved ones would kill themselves, no matter what evidence is used to determine the cause of death.

You should establish a protocol that outlines who should respond to the scene of an officer death by suicide with the understanding that the scene requires a full death investigation consistent with agency policy. These events are fluid and dynamic, and the circumstances encountered may require a specific response. Listed below is an example of an on-scene response:

- The first officers on the scene should immediately notify their patrol supervisor.
  - Secure the scene
  - Render aid
  - Recognize and protect evidence

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<sup>1</sup> Geberth, V. (2013). *Practical Homicide Investigation Checklist and Field Guide (Practical Aspects of Criminal and Forensic Investigations)*. CRC Press.

- The patrol supervisor will be responsible for notifying the shift commander.
- The shift commander will then notify:
  - The detective/investigative/crime scene personnel
  - The coroners/medical examiner's office
  - Any other response personnel deemed appropriate based on the totality of the circumstances found at the scene

The order of these duties is dictated by the conditions encountered at the crime scene and highly dependent on the circumstances facing the first officer on the scene.

### SECURING THE SCENE

Uniformed patrol officers are generally the first on the scene. As with any other crime scene, these officers are responsible for securing the scene as quickly and safely as possible, according to agency policy and procedure.

A secure scene will give the responding crime scene investigators the best chance to conduct a thorough investigation and make an objective determination that the mode of death was suicide, based on a series of factors that eliminate homicide, accident, and natural causes of death. Remember, until told otherwise, this is an active crime scene. Hence, the first officers on scene must adequately secure and maintain the parameters to avoid accusations of crime scene tampering and contamination caused by improper procedures.

Care and consideration should be given to family members that are on scene, and should be handled with the same amount of care and concern, consistent with following next of kin notification protocols.

### RENDERING AID

The first officers on the scene must provide medical care consistent with their training and abilities as quickly as possible. These officers will also be responsible for requesting that emergency medical technicians respond to the scene. Remember, medical interventions cannot begin until the scene has been rendered safe.

### RECOGNIZING AND PROTECTING EVIDENCE

All jurisdictions have local and state rules about the collection and preservation of evidence at the crime scene. Officers should follow these rules in all death investigations that involve a potential death by suicide.

## MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

Your agency should not release the deceased officer's name before notifying the immediate family—rule number one. The obligation to keep disclosures confidential after death (mostly) remains, but it is also a humane and ethical imperative to treat the surviving family with kindness and concern.

According to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, the privilege of confidentiality passes on to the deceased's "personal representative,"<sup>2</sup> the executor of the person's estate or "other person who has authority under applicable state or other law to act on behalf of the decedent or the decedent's estate." In many cases, the next of kin will have the authority to act on the decedent's behalf.

## NEXT OF KIN NOTIFICATION PROTOCOLS

Notification of the death should be made as soon as possible. A notification for a line-of-duty death is acknowledged to be one of the most challenging tasks faced by law enforcement. "Learning about the death of a loved one often is the most traumatic event in a person's life. The moment of notification is one that most people remember very vividly for the rest of their life—sometimes with pain and anger."<sup>3</sup> This process is even more complicated if the suspected cause of death is suicide.

It is essential to provide survivors with a human presence or "presence of compassion." Always make the death notification in person and not by telephone. Notifiers who are present can help if the survivor has a dangerous shock reaction, which is not uncommon, and they can help the survivor move through this challenging moment.

### A Post-Suicide Survivor Story: What Not to Do

*This morning, word got out that a deputy had died in the county. I am the wife of a deputy with the county, and of course, I wanted to know who it was. I also wanted to know why other first responders were sharing information before proper notification to the next of kin could be made. Out of sheer desperation and the sinking feeling in my gut, I tried my husband's cell phone. There was no answer. I tried again, still no answer. I guess this is where you start justifying why he is not picking up. Believing that he must just be helping with the incident, he must just be too busy to answer. I then called the agency*

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *Health Information of Deceased Individuals*. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/guidance/health-information-of-deceased-individuals/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Coroner Talk. (2013, November). *Death Notifications—CT14*. Retrieved from <https://coronertalk.com/ct14>.

*and was put on hold numerous times. I wanted to know who had died, so I could somewhat set my mind at ease. At one point, I was told that my husband was simply unavailable, and a supervisor would be responding to our home. This was the point I knew my question had been answered. It was my husband, my family, my loss. My world was turned upside down. Though I was upset at the fact that information had been “leaked,” I was also thankful for the support from my blue family after my husband’s death. There was support everywhere, and a couple of my husband’s friends still check on the kids and me, which truly means the world to us. This just shows how strong the blue family truly is. —Officer Suicide Survivor*

## ORDER OF NOTIFICATIONS

Consider establishing the order in which notifications occur.

The officer in charge shall be responsible for making all appropriate notifications to the agency’s executive command staff. In turn, the executive command staff shall be responsible for making the following notifications to:

- Individuals noted on the officer’s emergency notification form
- The officer’s family or next of kin
- Agency personnel (civilian, sworn, and retired)

## CONDUCTING THE NOTIFICATION

The notifiers may include the chief executive or designee; a member of the agency with personal knowledge of the deceased officer and his or her family; or a chaplain, crisis intervention specialist, victim advocate, or other support personnel. Include suggested language to guide notifying officials on giving the news to survivor(s).



## DEALING WITH THE MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA

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### Word Choices and Tone

It can make the difference in how information is received when referencing law enforcement death by suicide. Some recommendations outlined by the AAS include:

- Preferred language: “died by suicide” or “took his/her/their life” instead of “committed suicide”
- Use objective, non-sensationalistic language; do not describe suicide as a selfish act, epidemic, etc.
- Exclude details of the incident and focus on the life of the victim
- Frame suicide as determined by multiple factors rather than the result of a single cause
- Ensure that whatever resources provided contain reliable information
- Include a list of suicide warning signs and local crisis intervention resources

The agency’s policy for responding to an officer suicide should address the coordination of a media response. The policy may include:

- An official statement and press conference
- Information for survivors on how to handle media inquiries, provided to them by the agency point of contact
- Restrictions regarding the release of any information that may undermine legal proceedings
- Arrangements for appropriate event information and media access of the funeral, according to the wishes of survivors

The agency point of contact should prepare family members for possible negative comments on social media. The agency’s policy should address the coordination of a social media response. The policy may include:

- Monitoring of social media for details about the event
- Established procedures for the distribution of accurate information on social media and the correction of possible misinformation
- Consultation with the officer’s family before sharing information on the social media accounts associated with your agency
- Inclusion of contact information for a suicide prevention hotline or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in social media posts

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<sup>4</sup> American Association of Suicidology. (2008). *Suicide: Reporting Recommendations—Media as Partners in Suicide Prevention*. Retrieved from <https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Suicide-Media-Reporting-Extended-4-merged-1.pdf>.

## CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN

A [Continuity of Operations Plan](#) (COOP) is when a law enforcement agency ensures the maintenance of critical agency functions when confronted with adverse events.<sup>5</sup> The objective of a COOP is to continue to serve your people, your agency, and your community in the face of a critical event.

If your agency does not already have one, consider developing a COOP that will assist in the continued performance of essential functions across a broad spectrum of emergencies, including an officer death by suicide.

“When dealing with the loss of a first responder for any reason, I believe the more that you build relationships and plan, the better. I have talked to several chiefs who have lost an officer, and each one advised that it was very difficult, and there were so many things that you had to make decisions on; it was overwhelming. Each one was able to get through it, but it was difficult, and many wished that they had planned better for it and never needed it than to be without it.”

Chief William Balling  
Sidney, Ohio, Police Department

Chief William Balling is the leader of a municipal police department (52 employees) and has had to work with several organizations to make the contingency plans needed as part of his agency’s COOP. Like many small- to mid-sized agencies, he lacked the financial resources of larger agencies and had to determine what he could do with limited resources. This problem led him to develop plans to partner with other agencies to continue to provide the essential services his community needs. Chief Balling stated that many of the ideas they created did not cost the organization any money. According to Chief Balling, “It only took time and some creativity. Most agencies can do these steps.”

A COOP can help mitigate the impact of the incident on the agency and personnel while upholding the mission to protect and serve your community.

## PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

An officer death by suicide has the potential to profoundly impact your law enforcement agency and requires a shift of resources and adjustment of priorities to maintain public safety.

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<sup>5</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). *Continuity of Operations: An Overview*. Retrieved from [https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/org/ncp/coop\\_brochure.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/org/ncp/coop_brochure.pdf).

Law enforcement executives need to determine the most efficient short-term and potentially long-term strategies to cope with an event that may impact staffing.

Some considerations to effectively manage your agency's functions in the event of an officer suicide may include treating it as any other staffing shortages that you have previously encountered, such as large-scale public or community events, weather-related disasters, or critical incidents that deplete the workforce.

Assigning sworn officers from administrative or non-patrol activities can provide short-term solutions. Long-term solutions will require a significant amount of pre-planning and may include memorandums of understanding with law enforcement agencies near your jurisdiction.

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The need to develop a regional policing model using memorandums of understanding and agreements can provide overlapping services and valuable resources in a time of need.

"In the state of Ohio, there are implied mutual aid agreements across the state, so there is no need for a formal one. Agencies have agreed to help cover one another for emergency events, including needs during a funeral or additional coverage during a traumatic time. Departments have found out that there may be a need for coverage right after an event due to the emotional toll that it takes, and it is not just for the funeral. We have partnerships within our county and with another agency to assist, if needed. Agencies have access to the same radio frequencies whenever necessary and are familiar with each city's needs. The last three officer deaths that I was involved with, there were many agencies called upon to assist with a variety of things, including extra personnel to help cover calls; provide security, if needed; and help with traffic issues during the service and funeral."

Chief William Balling  
Sidney, Ohio, Police Department

## AGENCY CONSIDERATIONS

Agency considerations will entail assisting officers and other departmental staff members throughout the event and during post-care considerations. Agencies will be the liaison between the deceased officer's family and future agency considerations (e.g., returning agency equipment, clearing out the officer's personal items, going through the death care packet, any requests or considerations of dealing with a death by suicide) as well as the agency's funeral protocol, including honor guard services and family wishes. Lastly, the family and agency personnel will be notified of additional resources and short- and long-term follow-up plans to begin to build a foundation of growth.

## DEBRIEFINGS

Part of the debriefing process includes identifying and scheduling the professional follow-up that may be needed. Continuous peer support and follow-up is also essential. The EAP/peer support team should be available to any officer that needs assistance. It is important to note that these agency peer support members should also be offered outside support for themselves since they are not only dealing with their grief but also assisting fellow officers with theirs.

"Agencies should try and do a debriefing for all involved within the first 72 hours of the event. These meetings should include all agency members involved in responding to the scene; the members of the assigned station/unit where the officer worked; persons who personally knew the officer or were impacted by the death; and nearby agencies, if warranted. Usually, our command staff gives a general briefing of the situation, then leaves it in the hands of the EAP and peers to conduct the debriefing confidentially. The NYSP has done debriefings at churches, hospitals, fire halls, or anywhere else we could find a quiet space."

Inspector Neely Jennings  
New York State Police

Many agencies have access to EAP resources and some have crisis response teams as well. Agencies and their members must be familiar with the resources that are available to them. Do not wait until the last minute to find out who they are and how to make contact.

## FAMILY NEEDS

In the aftermath of an officer suicide, families are the most affected and yet can be the most forgotten. Agencies have lost an officer, other officers have lost a coworker, and communities have lost a guardian, but families have lost a loved one. Despite their profound grief, families are often somewhat supported in the immediate aftermath and then gradually forgotten. Suicides may not be treated equally to other law enforcement

deaths, and it is the family who is left feeling the effects of this relative inequity. Any unequal treatment may increase stigma and increase feelings of isolation, betrayal, and abandonment. For this reason, agencies are advised to review their policies regarding post-suicide efforts concerning the family and conduct an honest inventory of these practices to assess where inequities might exist and correct them. Such an inventory focuses on identifying key gaps and blind spots that may exist in agency policy. When conducting such an inventory, agencies are encouraged to build a heterogeneous and diverse advisory board that includes clinical representation and family members of those who have died by suicide.

Agencies should build a team of officers to serve as a family liaison unit following an officer suicide. This team should serve as both practical and emotional support and should have direct access to principals and decision makers involved in post-event efforts, including human resources; pension and finances; logistics (e.g., transportation); labor and union; and mental health and wellness resources. While there is no expectation that support team members will serve any sort of counseling role, they should receive crisis intervention training to effectively offer emotional support following an officer suicide, including active listening skills, de-escalation techniques, and psychological first aid. It is suggested that the family be given access to the team's support up to, at least, the first anniversary of the suicide.

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Unlike a line-of-duty death, there may be no financial benefits or support to an officer's spouse or family if an officer dies by suicide. Similarly, life insurance policies generally do not provide financial coverage when death occurs by suicide. Agencies and their support groups may consider a crowdfunding website or another social media fundraising effort to provide the family with immediate financial support as they begin to cope with the fallout.

Many agencies offer their members financial counseling. Depending upon the circumstances and at an appropriate time, agencies may consider arranging a financial counselor to assist the family in addressing the loss of income. This may include advice on seeking other financial assistance that may be available through private or state programs. The family may be entitled to any monies paid into a pension system or other retirement savings plan.

Additionally, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program, administered by BJA, beyond administering the federal benefits program, supports a range of peer support and counseling services for surviving families and agencies of fallen public safety officers through its close collaboration with the Concerns of Police Survivors and other national

organizations. PSOB specialists are always available Monday through Friday to speak with families and agencies regarding any questions they might have about the PSOB Program. The [PSOB Fact Sheet](#) provides information on how PSOB can assist agencies and families.

## FUNERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Law enforcement executives need a policy that provides detailed guidelines for the planning and implementation of police-related funerals and must standardize their response to the death of all active and retired members.

A death involving a suicide is a very tragic and confusing event, the effects of which seem to have a never-ending reach, leaving far more pain and unanswered questions that may never be resolved. Understand that even under the best of circumstances, a death and the events surrounding it will push every agency to their mental, physical, and emotional limits.

Suicide is a complicated quagmire that requires in-depth discussion, evaluation, and levelheaded decisions. It will involve the deceased member's family, departmental policy, politics, mental health considerations, religious beliefs, personal beliefs, ego, and possible criminal or unethical activities of the decedent.

Make sure your department has discussed and implemented a standard operational procedure (SOP) that will address a departmental suicide and all other deaths, as well as the various levels of service incurred at the department. The SOP should not be taken lightly, and it is recommended that it be formatted by those who are well versed and experienced in handling such formal and sensitive events.

Failure to do so will surely set your agency up for failure in many ways. Always evaluate your abilities honestly and sincerely (staffing, training, ceremonial, experience, etc.) when an event such as this happens. The lack of open-minded honesty will quickly reinforce your shortcomings—sadly, it will be at the expense of the surviving family, your agency image, reputation, and the public.

## DEATH CARE PACKET

A death care packet is information to assist the agency in an officer emergency or death. The details outlined in the packet can assist the agency and family with planning in the event of an officer death. It is strongly recommended that your agency consider having each officer complete a death care packet, which will outline each officer's wishes and how they would like the agency to proceed should an incident occur.

## FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

First and foremost, the family should be an integral part of the planning, with their wishes being the principal guide in how to honor their loved one. Their wishes must be respected but tempered against what the deceased's agency is prepared to do.

"As with all ceremonial events, this is not about you."

Officer Dan Foley (Retired)  
Wyandotte, Michigan, Police Department

While suicide is not considered a line-of-duty death and is therefore not memorialized by the NLEMM, there are still many sensitivities that must be considered when preparing for the funeral of an active-duty officer who has died by suicide.

Each case will be different and may warrant a different approach. For example, in the case of suicide involving a veteran officer who was well respected and served honorably, the department could follow closely to their line-of-duty death protocol and render honors as an acknowledgment of that officer's service and dedication. This will help the family and reduce any idea of shame or embarrassment. It is recommended that the ceremonial honors normally afforded a line-of-duty death not be rendered for a suicide. The key reason is that it is important to distinguish between the two types of death and not glorify suicide with a service that treats the death the same as a line-of-duty death.

However, if the officer who died by suicide was pending termination, was under criminal investigation, or had some other concern that may bring discredit to the agency, the chief must decide what, if any, departmental ceremonial support is appropriate. This decision process will inform how the Honor Guard approaches the service and what honors they will render.

Agency heads should ask themselves several questions to help them decide how they want to handle the funeral service and what level of acknowledgment is appropriate and can be offered to the family.

The decisions made will impact not only the family but the agency and its members as they deal with the loss of their coworker.

### DEATH CARE PACKET

- Is confidential and should be retained by administration
- Should only be opened in case of emergency or officer death
- Contains personal, family, financial, and religious information
- Should be reviewed annually by the officer

Officer Dan Foley (Retired)  
Wyandotte, Michigan, Police Department



Grief can be harsh, fresh, new, and confusing. Remember, the family is incredibly susceptible to any input, may have difficulty recalling conversations, or worse, may take comment(s) completely out of context.

### A Post-Suicide Survivor Story: Remembering His Service

*Knowing that my husband suffered from PTSD, depression, and anxiety related to his job, we felt he deserved a funeral with honors. It didn't matter that his death was by suicide. He was an exemplary officer for almost 24 years. He was "Officer of the Year" in 2008. I'm glad that this funeral was granted to him. To us, it was also important knowing that my husband would always be remembered. Unfortunately, a police officer's death by suicide, even if it is related to employment as a police officer, does not afford the same benefits as those officers whose lives are lost "in the line of duty." Sadly, in the case of suicide, there would be no financial assistance, memorial, or funding given to our family by any organization. —Officer Suicide Survivor*

### HONOR GUARD CONSIDERATIONS

Any decisions "to honor or not" will originate with the family's approval because many families have absolutely no knowledge of what they may or may not be entitled to or what may or may not be appropriate. It is strongly recommended not to make any suggestions regarding a service or specifics surrounding the service until all factors are evaluated. It is also important that no recommendations are made by anyone other than those who possess the authority or experience to do so.

"You have but one opportunity to do the right thing, to represent our profession, your agency, and care for a grieving family. This family is still 'OUR' family."

Officer Dan Foley (Retired)  
Wyandotte, Michigan, Police Department

Before any planning can proceed or be considered, many direct and uncomfortable questions must be asked. These questions absolutely must be approached with sensitivity, honesty, respect, and reverence, and must be answered in the same manner.

A recommended "safe" manner of approaching or viewing a departmental suicide when considering or planning departmental or ceremonial involvement and services would be to provide a "modified" funeral service customarily afforded to a "retiree."



In contrast to one who has “honorably” and formally retired and separated service from an agency after the full course of employment, someone who decides to end their life while still serving as a sworn employee complicates matters considerably. Therefore, it is suggested to possibly view this decision by the employee as willingly leaving the profession—albeit “retire” permanently.

## Hard Questions

- Was the deceased a good officer and employee?
  - Did the deceased meet and/or exceed the criteria as set forth by the department when he/she was hired?
- Was the deceased presently or previously involved in any crime or criminal investigation that would have brought disgrace upon the profession, agency, or city?
- When committing “the act,” did the deceased inflict any harm upon anyone else (other than himself/herself) and/or family due to the completion of “the act”?
  - Did the deceased commit any crime when planning, committing, or completing “the act”?
- When completing “the act,” did the deceased place any first responders or assisting entities in any undue harm or risk to investigate this incident?
  - Did or will any entity incur or bear any excessive financial expense to investigate; litigate (including civil settlements); recover (remains); and or clean up or return a scene back to its normal state? (Normal or nominal expenses are to be expected as would be done for any other incident.)
  - Did the deceased utilize any agency or city resources to complete “the act”?
- Had the deceased been offered any assistance in the past which would have or could have been related to any cause, resulting in this incident?
  - Was the agency aware of **any** previous, currently active, or underlying problems involving but not limited to: mental health, substance abuse, family history, family discord, or other? If “yes,” was the deceased eligible for assistance?

As with all funeral services, law enforcement officers “serve at the pleasure and discretion of their family,” but the next of kin holds the key for anything that may take place. Remember, while officers may have worked for your agency for the time that they were here, they ultimately belong to their family.

Questions will involve personal and/or confidential information that should be held in the absolute strictest of confidence and limited to only those personnel who absolutely must be involved to make the proper decisions on how to proceed.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Resources are essential in healing and supporting those affected by suicide. Proactive research continues to prevent and reduce the number of officers who die by suicide; however, you cannot operate by believing an officer death by suicide will not happen to your agency. It is essential for law enforcement agencies to have established plans, protocols, and resources in the event of an officer suicide. The [Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act](#) (LEMHWA) was signed into law in January 2018. “The act recognizes that law enforcement agencies need and deserve support in their ongoing efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of their employees.”<sup>6</sup> It is understood that law enforcement, though rewarding at times, can be extremely stressful and can be filled with negative aspects and traumatic events.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, many officers who struggle with challenging life issues do not seek appropriate and timely assistance or fail to do so in time to prevent a possible suicide or another adverse outcome. It is often not a single event that will lead to issues, but the accumulation of events with no intervention (whether peer support or professional). A failure to adequately take care of one’s mental health can contribute to adverse outcomes in every aspect of one’s life (relationships, health, behavior, work performance, mental health, etc.).

It is beneficial to bring resources into the agency to allow officers and family members the opportunity to develop relationships with those resources and services available, should future assistance be needed. Knowledge of available resources can often ease the fear that is often present in seeking help. Introducing members of the clergy, professional clinicians, or other support from your EAP for a lunch hour, lunch and learn, or other informal setting can initiate relationship building with your agency’s law enforcement personnel. Allow enough time for them to share what services are available and provide their contact information, should assistance be needed. Be sure to make these opportunities available to all personnel and consider multiple offerings of the

“Officer wellness programs must be prepared with protocols to handle post-law enforcement suicide while at the same time have programs/services that decrease suicide potential by promoting well-being.”

Robert Sobo, M.Ed., Psy.D.  
Director, Chicago Police Department  
Employee Assistance Program

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<sup>6</sup> The United States Department of Justice. (2019, May). *COPS Office Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness (LEMHWA) Program Resources*. Retrieved from <https://cops.usdoj.gov/lemhwareources>.

<sup>7</sup> Andersen, J., Papazoglou, K. (2015). Compassion Fatigue and Compassion Satisfaction Among Police Officers: An Understudied Topic. *Institutional Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, 17(3), 661-663. Retrieved from <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/73654>.

services available to allow all law enforcement personnel and family members to attend the presentation.

### PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

In part, due to the fear of negative career consequences, officers are reluctant to reach out for professional assistance, even when experiencing distress or impairment following the suicide of a coworker, partner, or friend. Despite wishing that the officer who died by suicide had reached out for help, officers distressed by the suicide may still be reluctant to seek professional assistance for themselves. Therefore, agencies should proactively work to reduce the stigma through cultural competency and mandated mental health checks, both as an aspect of post-officer suicide efforts as well as regularly scheduled checkups.

### LONG-TERM FOLLOW-UP (FAMILY AND OFFICERS)

In their [Handbook for Survivors of Suicide](#), the AAS acknowledges the effect on the family of the many “firsts” throughout the year following a suicide, as well as the anniversary of the suicide. Guidance from the National Suicide Prevention Alliance of England provides further acknowledgment that those days and dates (i.e., first holidays, birthdays, significant dates) may stir up strong emotional pain, and family members may even have thoughts of suicide themselves. For this reason, continued and committed follow-up with the family throughout the first year following the suicide is recommended.

In its response during the first year following an officer death by suicide, the agency can have a pivotal influence on the effect that the suicide will have on the officer’s family. The attention to providing support over this first year, or the lack thereof, can result in the family feeling supported, cared for, and

“Be sure to stay in contact with them throughout the year if they welcome that, not just around anniversaries or other remembrance dates. Those shouldn’t be the only times they hear from your agency.” How often should an agency be reaching out to the family? Inspector Jennings states, “You have to key off the family. Some will be happy to stay in contact. Some may be angry and want nothing to do with the agency.” Understanding how the family feels is essential.

Inspector Neely Jennings  
New York State Police

respected, or betrayed, discarded, and abandoned. Families have expressed feelings that agencies used “photo op” moments at funerals, with little or no follow-through afterward, leaving them feeling betrayed and misled. Similarly, families have expressed feeling lied to with platitudes (“I’m just a phone call away,” “We are here for you,” “Don’t hesitate to call,” etc.) that have no follow-up. Agencies are encouraged to maintain regular follow-up with families during the first year and keep any assurances made.

It is recommended that agencies become informed of the many services available for families following a suicide and build services when gaps are identified. For example, identifying scholarships for the children of officers who die by suicide or creating such a scholarship in-house when none exists. When suicide bereavement groups are available, agencies are encouraged to make such support known to families; when they are not, agencies are encouraged to design and support such a group. Furthermore, summer camps are available that are specifically designed for the children of those lost to suicide. Such programs should be explored and those opportunities should be shared with surviving family members.

### REMEMBERING ANNIVERSARY DATES, BIRTHDATES, ETC.

The grieving process does not end with a funeral service. After the funeral, while everyone returns to their daily lives, the family still grieves.

Everyone wants to do something to help the family. However, it can be overwhelming. Make sure you provide the family an opportunity to participate in, or opt out of, whatever event is going on and that the family is aware that it is acceptable to skip events when they need or want to. A rule of thumb is to contact the family a couple of days before the anniversary or other remembrance dates. Avoid calling them on the day of the anniversary itself.

### POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH

In response to a fellow officer's suicide, officers may become more self-aware due to their ability to relate to and empathize with the deceased officer or in seeking answers regarding the suicide. This can lead to a window of time when officers become more introspective, open to explore interventions, and to engage in treatment themselves. This provides agencies with a unique opportunity to utilize a post-traumatic growth postvention strategy and invite officers to engage in available services.

The subfield of positive psychology explores that which makes life most worth living, even in the face of traumatic loss and grief. Positive psychology emphasizes strengths over weaknesses, wellness over illness, and the development of resiliency skills to help people adapt to, overcome, and grow from adversity and trauma. In doing so, positive psychology focuses not on how trauma can create disorder, but on how people can grow from trauma in several specific ways. Agencies are encouraged to explore ways in which suicide postvention policies can be informed by aspects of positive psychology, specifically post-traumatic growth.

Post-traumatic growth posits that traumatic events present an opportunity to grow following the event in a number of ways: developing a deeper appreciation for life itself; recognizing, appreciating, and developing our innate strengths and resiliency skills; deepening and improving our relationships with others; rediscovering our spirituality and connections to our ideological beliefs; and identifying the possibilities in our lives post-trauma. In designing postvention efforts, agencies are recommended to become informed with the concept of post-traumatic growth and develop policies that incorporate a vision that is consistent with positive psychology.

For example, agencies are encouraged to offer resiliency training to members and encourage a resilience mindset in responding to traumatic events such as an officer suicide. Doing so focuses on empowering officers and families to develop their innate skills for adapting to adversity, overcoming challenges, and growing from trauma. Such a strategy not only serves to inoculate officers against future trauma but contributes to the development of a more resilient and trauma-informed agency.

“Post-traumatic growth consists of assuring that supervisors and peer support members should have awareness training on trauma, debriefings, and the specifics of Traumatic Incident Stress Management Directives. The more officers debriefed, the less likely traumatic symptoms develop and compromise mental health.”

Robert Sobo, M.Ed., Psy.D.  
Director, Chicago Police Department  
Employee Assistance Program

### PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTOPSIES

A psychological autopsy is a post-suicide exploration of the deceased officer’s life in the days, weeks, and months leading to the completed suicide. Although suicide is an act committed in an acute moment of crisis, an understanding of that moment involves analyzing multiple psychosocial and other variables. A psychological autopsy seeks to understand factors which contributed to the suicide by gathering multiple data points from throughout the officer’s life, including direct interviewing of all potential contacts. The purpose of a psychological autopsy is to best understand the causes of that specific suicide and contribute to the aggregate understanding of officer suicide in general and the identification of risk factors that can inform early warning systems to prevent future suicides.

Because these are specialized and highly sensitive investigations, it is recommended that agencies create a team specially trained in psychological autopsies. Such teams should include a seasoned investigator selected for intangible skills that are necessary for interviewing contacts such as family and coworkers (e.g., empathy, maturity, professionalism, psychological-mindedness) and a trained mental health professional with experience in suicide assessment and clinical intervention as well as expertise with current research regarding suicide.

Consider their purpose in conducting a psychological autopsy, as that purpose will inform the exploration in important ways. Law enforcement investigations are typically conducted in a manner that is seeking truth to support a criminal prosecution. Such a purpose necessarily involves suspicion, skepticism, and an interrogative style. This might be an appropriate approach if the purpose of a psychological autopsy is to determine the fact of suicide to rule out homicide or accidental death (as when conducted by insurance companies or other investigative bodies). If the purpose of a psychological autopsy, however, is to understand and inform rather than investigate, agencies should design postvention policies in a manner that utilizes psychological autopsies as a clinical exploration rather than a criminal investigation. Those conducting psychological autopsies should be sensitive and attentive to the emotional and psychological needs of contacts they interview, remembering they are simultaneously survivors and victims of the suicide. For this reason, the selection criteria of team members should involve clinical oversight.

For postvention, a psychological autopsy can inform follow-up efforts regarding family and coworkers. For example, a psychological autopsy might reveal which coworkers were particularly close to the officer who committed suicide, and thus direct the agency to who might most benefit from clinical intervention or other services. Further, a psychological autopsy might reveal that a particular assignment contributed to the suicide (the cumulative, vicarious trauma of child sex investigations; involvement in an officer-involved shooting; etc.), thus directing the agency to focus postvention efforts on other members with those experiences who may be struggling with the suicide and experiencing psychological distress or impairment themselves. These are but two examples of ways that data from thorough psychological autopsies can benefit postvention efforts.

“Data from psychological autopsies should be used to help inform the design of both prevention and postvention efforts. For prevention considerations, a psychological autopsy can inform early intervention systems about antecedent risk factors.”

Thomas Coghlan, Psy.D.  
*Blue Line Psychological Services, PLLC*  
(Retired Detective) New York, New York, Police Department  
Employee Assistance Program



## THE REALITY OF OFFICER SUICIDE

Unfortunately, suicide leaves behind many survivors. Individuals most closely related to the deceased are usually those most adversely affected by the death.<sup>8</sup>

Death by suicide is a growing health concern worldwide. Suicide in the United States is the tenth leading cause of mortality for all age groups.<sup>9</sup> Suicide among the 10–34 age group is the second leading cause of death and the fourth leading cause of death among the 35–54 age group.<sup>10</sup> Over 48,000 lives were lost to suicide in the United States in 2018, with nearly 1.5 million attempts.<sup>11</sup> The statistics are not only concerning, but “[t]here is a significant and growing body of empirical evidence confirming the deleterious effects of being exposed to suicide. Data clearly show that exposure to suicidal behavior (ideation and attempts) or a fatality raises the risk of subsequent suicide in people who have been exposed.”<sup>12</sup> Numerous first responders will be exposed to these scenes every year. Sadly, a leading threat among our first responder populations is suicide.<sup>13</sup>

*Focused support* should be something implemented and maintained by the agency. Focused support will be used to assist family members of officers who have died by suicide and those peers or others who may have been close to the officer or those struggling with the incident. These individuals will be identified and given additional assistance and would benefit greatly from follow-up care.<sup>14</sup>

According to the Survivors of Suicide Loss Taskforce (2015), the main goal in postvention is three-fold: “(1) to prevent further suicides, (2) to support the bereaved, and (3) to

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<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, A.M., Sakranda, T.J., Kim, Y., Bullian, L., Chiappetta, L. (2009). Depression, Anxiety and Quality of Life in Suicide Survivors: A Comparison of Close and Distant Relationships. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 23, 2–10.

<sup>9</sup> National Vital Statistics System, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC WISQARS. (2018). *Ten Leading Causes of Death by Age Group, United States—2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/images/lc-charts/leading-causes-of-death-by-age-group-2018-1100w850h.jpg>.

<sup>10</sup> National Institute of Mental Health. (2020). *Suicide*. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (2020). *Suicide Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics>.

<sup>12</sup> Survivors of Suicide Loss Task Force. (2015). *Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress: After a Suicide: U.S. National Guidelines*. Washington, DC: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/migrate/library/RespondingAfterSuicideNationalGuidelines.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Heyman, M., Dill, J., Douglas, R. (2018). *The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders*. Ruderman Family Foundation. Retrieved from [https://rudermanfoundation.org/white\\_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty](https://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty).

<sup>14</sup> Heyman, M., Dill, J., Douglas, R. (2018). *The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders*. Ruderman Family Foundation. Retrieved from [https://rudermanfoundation.org/white\\_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty](https://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty).

counteract the other negative effects of exposure to suicide.”<sup>15</sup> The use of focused support will be seen regarding short-term/immediate need and long-term follow-up care for survivors. There is no prescribed length of time for these efforts; it depends on the speed of recovery, extent of trauma, etc. Healing will be different for each agency.<sup>16</sup> This will also include additional interactions and follow-ups around special dates (e.g., birthdays or anniversaries of the suicide or other deaths) and events that may continue to cause extended issues to those close to the deceased. These dates, anniversaries, and events can negatively trigger others and contribute to copycat suicides and additional suicide ideation and risk.

One study indicated that it is likely that over 115 people are impacted by each death by suicide.<sup>17</sup> That equates to over 5.5 million people who will in some way be impacted by suicide each year. Death by suicide can often leave survivors with emotional conflict as to the reasons behind the death, personal beliefs about suicide, etc. It is extremely important to not only understand that many will grieve differently, but in doing so, to provide numerous resources, as this will not be a one-size-fits-all type of support. However, plans and protocols must be in place prior to an incident, as planning during an incident is extremely stressful and full of emotions. These plans must be compassionate to the survivors and able to quickly be implemented.<sup>18</sup>

One major area of concern is the idea of self-care. Self-care consists of one’s most basic needs (balanced diet, housing, financial, sleep, social support, medical/emotional care, etc.). Self-care may also include the need for short- and long-term professional assistance. It is best to have numerous resources available for families and officers to utilize in their own time and in private. For example, following a death by suicide, surviving spouses and family members will often lose medical insurance. So, families may need to look for alternative means of assistance. Usually, life insurance policies will not

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<sup>15</sup> Survivors of Suicide Loss Task Force. (2015). *Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress After a Suicide: U.S. National Standards*. Washington, DC: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Retrieved <https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/NationalGuidelines.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> National Officer Safety Initiatives Program (NOSI). (2020). *Comprehensive Framework for Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention*. National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide (the Consortium). Retrieved from [244736\\_IACP\\_NOSI\\_Framework\\_combo.pdf \(theiacp.org\)](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/migrate/library/244736_IACP_NOSI_Framework_combo.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Survivors of Suicide Loss Task Force. (2015). *Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress After a Suicide: U.S. National Guidelines*. Washington, DC: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/migrate/library/RespondingAfterSuicideNationalGuidelines.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2015). *Provide for Immediate and Long-Term Postvention*. Retrieved from <https://www.sprc.org/comprehensive-approach/postvention>.



pay out for suicide. These things can catch a family off guard and can be financially and emotionally devastating.

## FEAR OF SEEKING ASSISTANCE

Stigma is a major barrier preventing officers from seeking mental health treatment, either on their own or in response to a traumatic event such as a fellow officer suicide. Stigma can be both top-down (i.e., due to organizational culture or principal viewpoint) or bottom-up (i.e., socialized stigma among the rank and file). To truly combat stigma, there must be a simultaneous partnership across the rank structure, with support for mental health initiatives at the organizational and principal level, as well as buy-in and acceptance among the rank and file.

Stigma is fueled by a rational, pragmatic concern for one's career and reputation. Officers fear that there will be career consequences for seeking out treatment, such as being placed on positional limitation, removal of firearms, loss of assignment, damage to promotional considerations, recording of a mental health record in the personnel file, and the possibility of being separated from their agency on a psychological disability. Furthermore, officers fear that their reputation will be tarnished among their colleagues—they will be perceived as weak or unpredictable, that other officers will second-guess their actions or decision making, that other officers will not want to work alongside them, or that they will be the subject of gossip or jokes.

Agencies are encouraged to perform an honest and genuine review of mental health policies and procedures to determine where the root of stigma may lie. Are agency mental health policies designed to mimic disciplinary policies? In other words, are officers who voluntarily seek mental health treatment treated procedurally equal to an officer who has engaged in misconduct and is facing disciplinary charges? Is there a separate policy to address officers who voluntarily seek treatment from officers who are referred to treatment for a cause? Is there a procedural distinction between the agency's fitness for duty policy and treatment policy? Is the agency approaching mental health and wellness initiatives from a transactional "check-the-box" approach or is there a sincere transformational intent? Are mental health and wellness employees or units given the breathing room and autonomy to be helpers or are they limited by the confines of traditional paramilitary hierarchy and chain-of-command? Agencies are encouraged to answer these and other questions in a sincere review of their mental health and wellness policy.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Being culturally competent regarding police culture is essential to delivering effective clinical services to police officers. It is a basic premise of multiculturalism that all human behavior occurs within a cultural context. Officer behavior within the cultural context of law enforcement is one example. Cultural competence is having fluency and demonstrated familiarity with the behaviors, habits, values, tendencies, language, traditions, symbols, environment, and other intangibles of a given culture. Agencies are encouraged to establish a network of culturally competent and occupationally aware mental health professionals as clinical referrals for their officers.

Anecdotally, many officers relay experiences with non-culturally competent clinicians that drive them even further away from treatment. Also, officers express difficulty in engaging in treatment with a mental health professional that “just doesn’t get” police work. Establishing an agency relationship with a network of culturally competent mental health professionals can bridge the gap between officers and effective intervention. As part of a postvention strategy, such a network will permit an agency to have at the ready a network of clinicians for a clinical referral or direct response to agency facilities, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Agencies nationwide, both large and small, are feeling the tremendous agony of losing an officer to suicide. The most effective way to address this issue is by increasing awareness and developing prevention and support strategies. Unfortunately, implementing the best practices and standards in officer emotional support and mental wellness will not prevent all deaths by suicide. With that reality in mind, agencies must have plans in place should such a tragic and unfortunate event occur to a member of their agency. Crisis planning is not a new concept for law enforcement. It is the idea to always plan for the worst and hope for the best. Law enforcement executives must prepare for a circumstance that they hope will never happen and have plans in place to provide assistance and support in the most difficult of times; anything less is unacceptable.

We will continue to work on prevention efforts through the SAFLEO Program, and in the last words of an officer who died by suicide: “. . . make my death an issue and help others like me.”

Let’s work together to make sure this officer’s last words were not in vain.

## RESOURCES

It should be noted that as of the publication date, these links are active but that some may change with time and availability.

### EAP

Access EAP: <https://access-eap.org/programs/>.

Philadelphia Police Department EAP Directive 6.14:  
<https://www.phillypolice.com/assets/directives/D6.14-EmployeeAssistanceProgram.pdf>.

COPLINE—International Law Enforcement Officers’ Hotline, An Officer’s Lifeline:  
<https://www.copline.org/>.

### FAMILY SUPPORT

I Need a Lighthouse: A Depression and Suicide Education Awareness Program Website and After a Suicide: Resources and Support for Grieving Families, Individuals, and Communities:

<https://www.ineedalighthouse.org/depression-suicide/after-a-suicide-resources-and-support-for-grieving-families-individuals-and-communities/>.

American Association of Suicidology—A Handbook for Survivors of Suicide:  
[https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SOS\\_handbook.pdf](https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SOS_handbook.pdf).

Public Safety Officers’ Benefits Program Fact Sheet:  
<https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/public-safety-officers-benefits-program-fact-sheet>.

### HOTLINES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Chat: 1 (800) 273-8255, text “BLUE” to 741741, or visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

Copline Hotline: 1 (800) 267-5463 or visit <https://www.copline.org/>.

### SELF-CARE

Resources for Suicide Loss Survivors: <https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Resources-for-Survivors-of-Suicide.pdf>.

## SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

National Suicide Awareness for Law Enforcement Officers (SAFLEO) Website:  
[www.safleo.org](http://www.safleo.org)

- Officer Suicide: Understanding the Challenges and Developing a Plan of Action: <https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/1290>
- Mitigating the Emotional Impact of Stress on Law Enforcement Personnel: [https://www.valorforblue.org/Documents/SOS\\_Stress\\_Johnson\\_Jaeckle\\_Emotional\\_Impact\\_of\\_Stress\\_on\\_LE.pdf](https://www.valorforblue.org/Documents/SOS_Stress_Johnson_Jaeckle_Emotional_Impact_of_Stress_on_LE.pdf)
- SAFLEO Executives and Mental Health Podcast: <https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/1337/Executives-and-Mental-Health>
- Developing Peer-to-Peer Support Groups Podcast: <https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/1301/Developing-Peer-to-Peer-Support-Groups>
- Mid-Level Support Networks Podcast: <https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/1329/Mid-Level-Support-Networks>
- Debriefing Trauma Podcast: <https://www.valorforblue.org/clearinghouse/1328>
- Smash the Stigma Podcast: <https://www.valorforblue.org/clearinghouse/1303>

BJA Law Enforcement Officer Safety and Wellness Surge Effort Resources  
(<https://www.valorforblue.org>)

- Icebreakers Posters: <https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/1338/Icebreakers>
- Collection Name: Got A Minute?/While We Have You Poster Series: <https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/Collection/b4341ee1-da43-47bf-9c0e-9462a5472150>

National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide Toolkit:  
<https://www.theiacp.org/resources/national-consortium-on-preventing-law-enforcement-suicide-toolkit>

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) National Symposium on Law Enforcement Officer Suicide and Mental Health: Breaking the Silence on Law Enforcement Suicides:  
[https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Officer\\_Suicide\\_Report.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Officer_Suicide_Report.pdf).

Breaking the Silence: Suicide Prevention for Law Enforcement Video Facilitation Guide:  
<https://theactionalliance.org/sites/default/files/leguide.pdf>.

Breaking the Silence: Suicide Prevention for Law Enforcement Video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBJbo7mnnBs&feature=youtu.be>.

## SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

Officer Down Form

First Responder Down Policy, Sidney Police Department

Funeral Protocol Quick Reference Guide, Los Angeles Police Department

Honoring Deceased Personnel Policy, Baltimore Police Department

Mutual Aid Model Policy, IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center

CONFIDENTIAL  
Officer Down Form

Information will be used ONLY in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill it out accurately because the data will be of extreme comfort to your family and the <Insert Agency Name> in fulfilling your wishes.

**Officer Information**

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Information**

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) and date(s) of birth of your children.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are divorced, please provide information about your ex-spouse:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want a police representative to contact your ex-spouse?  Yes  No

Please list the name, address, and telephone numbers of your children that live outside the family home. Also include any other relatives (parents, siblings, in-laws, etc.) that you want contacted.

Name	Address	Phone (H)(W)(C)	Relationship
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**Notifications**

Please list the person you would like to be contacted by a police representative in the event of a serious injury or death in the line of duty. (Begin with the first person you would like to be notified.)

Name	Address	Phone (H)(W)(C)	Relationship
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services?  Yes  No

If yes, list branch of service. \_\_\_\_\_

If you are entitled to a military funeral as determined by the Department of Veteran Affairs, do you wish to have one?  Yes  No

Do you wish to have a law enforcement funeral?  Yes  No

Please list memberships in law enforcement, religious, or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family.

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Do you have a living will?  Yes  No

If so, where is it located? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a will?  Yes  No

If so, where is it located? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any insurance policies you may have.

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Policy: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Policy: \_\_\_\_\_



Are there any special requests or directions you would like followed upon your death?

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Are there any other considerations or wishes you would like followed upon your death (will, do not resuscitate [DNR] personal property, etc.)?

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Is there anyone you would like to accompany the police representative when the notification is made to your immediate family? If someone is other than a <Insert Agency Name> Officer, please include their address and phone number.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anyone you would like to be contacted to assist your family, with funeral arrangements, or related matters that is not listed above? This person should be knowledgeable concerning your life insurance representative(s), location of your will, etc.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Information**

Please list any preferences you may have regarding funeral arrangements.

Name of Funeral Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Church or Synagogue: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## First Responder Down

### 809.1 POLICY

The Sidney Police Department will assist the survivors of member or former member of the department who passes away. This assistance is provided whether the death was a result of an in the line of duty death, natural death, or as a result of a suicide.

The Chief of Police will designate which portions of the policy will apply due to the situation.

### 809.2 COORDINATION OF EVENTS

Coordination of events following the line of duty death of a police officer is an extremely important and complex responsibility. Professionalism and compassion must be exhibited at all times as an obligation to the member's survivors and to the law enforcement community. In order to provide the best possible services and support for the members family, specific tasks may be assigned to selected members of the Sidney Police Department. Their titles are;

Notification Officer

Hospital Liaison Officer

Family Assistance Officer

Department Liaison Officer

Benefits Coordinator

An explanation of each of these responsibilities is contained in this order. A member may be called upon to perform more than one role.

The Chief of Police, or his/her designee, will 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 will be rendered.

With the approval of the family, the Chief of Police will assign a Family Assistance Officer, Liaison Officer and Benefits Coordinator.

Police Officers are encouraged to maintain an up to date "Confidential Death Information" form. The information will be of extreme comfort to member's families and the Sidney Police Department in fulfilling the deceased officer's wishes.

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#### 809.2.1 NOTIFICATION OFFICER

It is the responsibility of the Chief of Police or his designee to properly notify the next of kin of a member who had suffered injuries or died. The Chief of Police or designee may personally make the notification or choose a Notification Officer to inform the survivors.

Victim Services will be notified to assist with making the notification.

The name of the deceased officer will NOT be released by the Sidney Police Department before the immediate family is notified.

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.

Notifications will be made in person and never alone. The Chief of Police or his or her designee, victim services, police chaplain, trained officer, close friend, or another police survivor will accompany the notification officer. A reasonable amount of time should be allowed to assemble the group to assist the notification officer. The family should learn of the death from the Sidney Police Department first and not from the media or other sources, if possible.

Never make a death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted into the residence. Inform family members slowly and clearly of the death or injury. If specifics of the incident are known, the notification officer should relay as much information as possible to the family. Be sure to use the officer's name during the notification. If the member has died, relay that information. Never give the family a false sense of hope. Use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away".

If the family requests to visit the hospital, they should be transported by police vehicle. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves to the hospital. If the family insists on driving, a member of the notification group should accompany them in the family vehicle. If the family member(s) wish to drive themselves, they should be followed to ensure their safety.

If young children are at the home, the member of the notification group should try to assist in making arrangements for babysitting needs. This may involve co-workers' spouses, transportation of children to a relative's home, or similar arrangements.

Prior to departing for the hospital, the notification officer should notify the hospital staff and the hospital liaison (by telephone if possible) that a member(s) of the family is in route.

The deceased or severely injured officer's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification whenever possible.

If immediate survivors live beyond Shelby County, the notification officer will ensure that the communication technician sends a teletype message to the appropriate jurisdiction, requesting a personal notification. The notification officer shall call the other jurisdiction by telephone in addition to the teletype message. Arrangements should be made to permit simultaneous telephone contact between the survivors and the Sidney Police Department.

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The Chief of Police, Captain, or Sergeant should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with family as quickly as possible.

In the event of an on duty death, the external monitoring of the police frequencies may be extensive. Whenever possible, communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone. If the media has obtained the officer's name, they will be advised to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin.

#### 809.2.2 HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER

The first official officer, at the hospital, who has been designated by the Chief of Police, becomes the hospital liaison officer. The hospital liaison is responsible for coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the member's family, police officer's, media and others. These responsibilities include:

- Arranging with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, immediate survivors, the Chief of Police, and the notification officer.
- Arranging a separate area for fellow police officers to assemble.
- Establishing a media staging area. During business hours, the media staging area will be in the Customer Medical Office Building. If the critical incident happened after business hours, the media staging area will be in a designated area of the parking lot.
- Ensuring that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding the officer's condition to the family on a timely basis and before such information is released to others.
- Notifying the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased officer are directed to the Family Assistance Officer. The Family Assistance Officer will need to contact the patient accounting center within five days after the incident, to have any and all medical bills directed to the Sidney Police Department.
- Ensuring that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital.
- Arranging transportation for the family back to their residence.

If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer before death, they should be afforded that opportunity. A police official 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. Medical personnel should advise the family of visitation policies and, in the event of death, explain why an autopsy may be necessary.

The notification officer(s) should remain at the hospital while the family is present. Do not be overly protective of the family. This includes sharing specific information as to how the officer met his or her demise, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased officer.

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### 809.2.3 FAMILY ASSISTANCE OFFICER

The selection of a family assistance officer is a critical assignment. An attempt should be made to assign someone who enjoyed a close relationship with the member and his or her family. When possible, “teams” should be utilized as a family assistance officer(s), thus preventing bonding between the survivor(s) and member during a vulnerable time in the survivor’s life. The team may consist of but not limited to victim services, other officer’s that were close to the family/officer, “police wives”, and so forth.

This is not a decision making position, but a “facilitator” between the family and the Department.

Responsibilities of the family assistance officer(s) include:

- Ensuring that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department.
- Assisting the family with funeral arrangements and making them aware of what the Department can offer if they decide to have a police funeral. If they choose the latter, briefing the family on funeral procedure (i.e., presenting the flag, playing of taps, firing party).
- Apprising the family of information concerning the death and the continuing investigation.
- Providing as much assistance as possible, including overseeing travel and lodging arrangements for out of town family members, arranging for food for the family, meeting child care and transportation needs, etc.
- Being constantly available to the family.
- Determining what public safety, church, fraternal and labor organizations will provide in terms of financial assistance for out of town family travel, food for funeral attendees following the burial, etc

### 809.2.4 DEPARTMENT LIASION OFFICER

This position is will be a designee of the Chief of Police.

Responsibilities of the department liaison officer include:

- Working closely with the family assistance officer to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled.
- Handling the news media throughout the ordeal. If the family decides to accept an interview, a member should attend to “screen” questions presented to the family so as not to jeopardize subsequent legal proceedings.
- Meeting with the following persons to coordinate funeral activities and establish and itinerary:
  - Chief of Police
  - Funeral Director
  - Family priest or minister
  - Cemetery director

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- Honor guard
- Directing the funeral activities of the Department and visiting police agencies according to the wishes of the family.
  - Issuing a teletype message to include the following:
    - Name of deceased
    - Date and time of death
    - Circumstances surrounding the death
    - Funeral arrangements (state if service will be private or police funeral)
    - Uniform to be worn
    - Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers
    - Contact person and phone number for visiting agencies to call to indicate their desire to attend or to obtain further information
- Establishing a command center if necessary, to coordinate information and response to the tragedy.
- Developing a policy for the wearing of badge memorial ribbons and use of patrol vehicle memorial sashes.
- Obtaining an American Flag. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief of Police.
- Determining if the family desires a burial in uniform and selecting a member to obtain a uniform and all accouterments (except weapons) and deliver them to the funeral home.
- Assigning members for usher duty at the church.
- Arranging for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family.
- Briefing the Chief of Police and staff concerning all funeral arrangements.
- Ensuring that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged for them during the funeral procession.
- Arranging for EMS personnel on standby for the family, if necessary.
- Coordinating traffic management, with other jurisdictions during the viewing, funeral and procession, and arranging for a tow truck to be available along the procession route.
- American Flags along the funeral route to the cemetery.
- If possible, arranging an officer to remain at the family's home during the viewing and funeral.
- Maintaining a roster of all Agencies sending personnel to the funeral, including:
  - Name and address of responding agencies
  - Name of the Chief of Police or Sheriff

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- Number of officers attending
- Number of officers attending the reception after the funeral
- Number of vehicles
- Coordinating road patrol for our jurisdiction during the viewing and funeral proceedings.
- Acknowledging visiting and assisting departments.
- Arranging for routing residence checks for the survivors home for six to eight weeks following the funeral. This service is necessary since large amounts of money are passing through the residence and the survivors will be spending time away from the home dealing with legal matters

### 809.2.5 BENIFITS COORDINATOR

The benefits coordinator will gather information on benefits/funeral payments available to family.

The benefits coordinator has the Department's full support to fulfill this responsibility to the survivors and is completely responsible for filing the appropriate benefit paperwork and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received.

The benefits coordinator is responsible for:

- Assist in working with the filing of Worker's Compensation claims and related paperwork.
- Contacting the appropriate offices without delay to ensure that the beneficiary receives death and retirement benefits, the member's remaining paychecks and payment for the remaining annual and compensatory time.
- Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments, to include the Public Safety Officers Benefits Act, that are available to the family.
- Setting up any special trust funds or educational funds.
- Notifying police organizations such as Heroes, Inc, FOP, and so forth 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.
- Preparing a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that due to the family, listing named beneficiaries and contacts at various benefits offices, and when they can expect to receive payment.
- Meeting with the surviving family a few days after the funeral to discuss the possible benefits they will receive. A copy of the prepared printout and any other related paperwork should be given to the family at this time.
- If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the child(ren) may be receiving.
- Attention should be given to the revocation of health care benefits (i.e., health insurance – single or family)
- Assist family if no will has been prepared.



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- Meeting again with the family in about six months to ensure they are receiving benefits.

#### **809.3 ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED MEMBERS**

Officers who were on the scene or who arrived moments after an officer was critically injured or killed should be relieved of duty as quickly as possible.

Police witnesses and other officers who may have been emotionally affected by the serious injury or death of another officer will attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing held by a trained mental health professional.

#### **809.4 CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY**

Members of the Sidney Police Department must remain sensitive to the needs of the survivors long after the officer's death. The grief process has no timetable. More than half of the surviving spouses can be expected to develop a posttraumatic stress reaction to the tragedy.

- Survivors should continue to feel a part of the "police family".
- Members of the Sidney Police 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.
- The Chief of Police 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.
- Holidays may be especially difficult for the family, particularly if small children are involved. Increased contact with the survivors and additional support is important at these times.
- The Family Assistance Officer acts a long term liaison with the surviving family to ensure that close contact is maintained between the Sidney Police Department and the survivors and that their needs are met for as long as they feel the need for support.
- If no court proceedings surround the circumstances of the officer's death, the Chief of Police or his designee will relay all the details of the incident to the family at an appropriate time.

If criminal violations surround the death, the Chief of Police will:

- Inform the family of all new developments prior to a press release.
- Keep the family apprised of legal proceedings.
- Introduce the family to the victims' assistance specialists of the court.
- Encourage the family to attend the trial, and accompany them whenever possible.
- Arrange for detectives to meet with the family at the earliest opportunity following the trial to answer all their questions.

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### **809.5 FUNERAL PROCEDURES**

All Honor Guard/Officers will maintain an excellent personal appearance. Uniforms and equipment must be in outstanding condition.

#### Uniforms

- Long sleeve shirt and tie.
- Members of the Honor Guard, officer's and pallbearers will wear white gloves.
- A black sash will be worn across the badge.

#### Funeral Services

- Honor Guard and officers who attend the funeral services will report to a pre-designated assembly point away from the place of the services for inspection and briefing.
- From the assembly point, members will march to the place of the service, timing their arrival to permit immediate entry.
- Upon entering the building, members will remove their uniform hats, place them under their left arm, hat brim forward, and move in an orderly manner to the place reserved for them.
- Members will remain standing until all members are in their places and the command, "BE SEATED" is given.
- Members will sit with their hats upright in their laps, maintaining a military bearing throughout the service.
- At the end of the service, members, upon receiving the command, "OFFICERS RISE", will rise in unison and place their hats under their left arm preparatory to filing past the casket. They will hold their hats in this position until they have passed the casket and arrived outside.
- Upon leaving the building, members will replace their hats and assemble in formation at right angles to the hearse.
- Two ranks will be formed facing each other, leaving an aisle through which pallbearers and casket may pass.
- Members will be formed by height. They will normally be dressed at extended intervals but may be dressed at close intervals if space is limited.
- While waiting in formation, members will stand at parade rest.
- When the casket comes into view, the formation will be called to attention. The next command will be "PRESENT ARMS". All members salute and hold this salute until the casket is placed in the hearse. At this time, the command, "READY, FRONT", will be given and members will return their hands to their sides.

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- After the doors of the hearse are closed, the command “FIRST RANK (passenger side of hearse). RIGHT FACE” and “SECOND RANK, (driver side of the hearse) LEFT FACE”, is given so that the two columns are facing the hearse.
- The commander will then dismiss the formation with the command, “OFFICERS DISMISSED”. The members will break ranks and leave in a quiet and orderly manner.
- Members will then take their assigned places in the motorcade and proceed to the cemetery.

### Gravesite Services

- Members will report to the places that have been reserved for them immediately upon arrival at the gravesite. If indoors, members will remove their hats and hold them under their left arm. All members will sit with hats in their laps, maintaining a military bearing throughout the services. If services are held outdoors, members will wear their hats.
- Just prior to the 21 gun salute and taps, the command, “OFFICERS RISE” will be given. Members will stand at attention facing the firing team or bugler. When the 21 gun salute and taps have been concluded, the command “OFFICERS DISMISSED” will be given. Members will then break ranks and return to their assigned vehicles.

### 809.5.1 SUGGESTED ORDER OF EVENTS

#### Suggested Order of Events

First, the honor guard designee escorts the family to the staging area, meeting up with the casket.

The Chief of Police is advised to start the ceremony. At this point, the honor guard (casket detail, pallbearers) performs its duties. They accompany the casket to its place of honor, and the honor guard presents the colors.

After this ceremony, the funeral service itself begins. Following is an example of the order of events.

- (a) Invocation
- (b) Prayer
- (c) Opening remarks/greetings
- (d) Special music
- (e) Scripture reading/clergy remarks
- (f) Speakers
  - ° Mayor
  - ° Local elected officials
  - ° State or Federal Official
  - ° Family representative(s)
  - ° Department representative's friends

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- Eulogy – Chief of Police, dignitaries, and/or family
- (a) Special music
- (b) Presentations
- (c) Closing remarks/prayer
- (d) 21 Bells/21 gun salute (also may be performed at cemetery)
- (e) Bagpipes play (Amazing Grace, for example)
- (f) Final Radio Call ceremony – (also may be performed at the cemetery)
- (g) Honor Guard retires the colors
- (h) Bagpipes play as the pallbearers remove the casket
- (i) Dismissal instructions

#### 809.5.2 LAST CALL - END OF WATCH DISPATCHER

Last Call – End of Watch : Dispatch

The Chief of Police will designate a dispatcher to perform the “Last Call – End of Watch” transmission, in the event that an officer(s) die in the line of duty. This may be done by the most senior dispatcher or a dispatcher from the deceased officer(s) shift.

Dispatch; Stand by on all radio traffic.

Dispatch; Station to (officer(s) unit number)

Wait five seconds.

Dispatch; Station to (officer(s) unit number and title/name)

Wait five seconds.

Dispatch; Station to (officer(s) unit number and title/name)

Wait five seconds.

Dispatch; Unit number is 10-7, out of service.

Pause for 3 seconds.

Dispatch; Unit number, you will be missed by all. Thank you for your service, loyalty, and dedication.

Pause for 3 seconds.

Dispatch; Unit number, you served our department from (hire date) to (date of passing away).

Pause for 3 seconds

Dispatch; End of Watch, may you watch over us. We will take it from here. You will not be forgotten. We ask everyone for a moment of silence.

Pause for 10 seconds.

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Dispatch; You may resume radio traffic.

### **809.6 HONORS ACCORDED**

Any Sidney Police Department Officer who dies in the line of duty will be accorded full honors, if requested by the survivors. This will include the casket watch during the viewing, honor guard, pallbearers, firing squad, taps, military flag fold and presentation and motor escort.

The Honor Guard Commander is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the Honor Guard, casket watch, pallbearers, firing squad, bugler, and flag presentation.

#### Casket Watch

- The casket watch is usually comprised of officers from the Honor Guard. However, departmental officers may volunteer to stand watch at the discretion of the Chief of Police. Officers who are assigned to the casket watch must present an excellent uniform appearance and conform to all current grooming regulations.
- The dress uniform dress jackets, white shirt, tie dress pants, hat and white gloves, will be worn for the casket watch. The watch will be divided into shifts with two officers standing 30 minutes at a time.
- If the family wishes, an informal watch can take place after the viewing has been concluded for the day.
- The casket watch moves in slow cadence. This includes marching, movements and saluting. The official will post the watch and the officers will position themselves at or near the head and feet of the deceased officer.

#### Honor Guard

- Members of the Honor Guard will assemble at a location near the service (church, funeral home, or cemetery) for inspection by the Honor Guard Commander.
- Commands will be executed by the Honor Guard Commander.

#### Pallbearers

- If pallbearers are requested by the family, they will be selected by the Chief of Police if not noted in the line of duty packet..
- Pallbearers will be under the direction of the Honor Guard Commander. They will report to the funeral home as directed for instructions and seating arrangements.

#### Procedural Variation

- The procedures outline in this Order shall be followed in most cases. Any changes made necessary by a shortage of manpower, the unusual size of the funeral, the type of service, the physical arrangement of the place of the service or for any other reason shall be made by the Chief of Police.

Any additional honors to be accorded to the deceased officer or deceased officer of other law enforcement agencies shall be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

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If an officer dies due to suicide, after leaving the department on a medical retirement, after retirement, or so forth, Honors Accorded to that officer will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police on a case by case basis.

### 809.6.1 DEATH BENEFITS

#### DEATH BENEFITS;

- Educational Benefits – The children and spouse of an officer who dies in the line of duty, and who is admitted to any State university or college (community college, state community college, university branch or technical college), shall not be required to pay any tuition or any student fee for up to four years of education, which shall be at an undergraduate level. [www.ohiohighered.org](http://www.ohiohighered.org) 614-466-6000
- Kids Chance, Inc. – Scholarship program designated to help children who have had a parent killed or permanently disabled in a work related accident. Children ages between 16 and 22. [www.kidschance.org](http://www.kidschance.org) 877-933-0222.
- Workers Compensation – Workers Compensation benefits are payable to beneficiaries of ALL agency personnel providing the following criteria as outlined in “A”, are met.
- Should death be caused by or related to an industrial injury or disease, worker’s compensation will be paid to the spouse for life duration unless remarriage occurs and to dependent children until age 18 or beyond age 18 if disabled, or until age 25 is full time students.
- If the spouse remarries, they will receive an amount equal to two years compensation.
- Rate; 2/3 of the decedent’s average weekly wage.
- Maximum burial allowance is \$5000.00.
- To receive workers’ compensation benefits the surviving spouse must take the initiative and file a workers’ compensation claim thru a workers’ compensation attorney to receive any compensation. [www.ohiobwc.com](http://www.ohiobwc.com) 800-644-6292
- Additional Benefits – Peer Support Organization – Works with law enforcement agencies, police organizations, mental health professional, and local peer support organizations to provide assistance to surviving families. – [www.nationalcops.org/chap.htm](http://www.nationalcops.org/chap.htm) 800-784-2611
- Ohio Victims of Crime Compensation Program – Victims of criminally injurious conduct and their dependents for a wide variety of out of pocket expenses. Enabling all victims to have the opportunity to be represented by the attorney of their choice with attorney fees paid from the reparations fund. [www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/victimscompensation](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/victimscompensation)
- Funeral and Cremation Benefits – This program provides dignified and honorable tributes, at no cost, for career and volunteer law enforcement officers who fall in the line of duty. [www.dignitymemorial.com](http://www.dignitymemorial.com) 800-344-6489

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- Concerns of Police Survivors – 800-784-2677 [www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org) or [cops@nationalcops.org](mailto:cops@nationalcops.org)
- Shelby County Victim Services – They will assist in various ways; therapy for family members at no cost, assist in filing paperwork with victim compensation – \$8000.00 for funeral cost and medical bills, willing to assist at the funeral and afterwards with family members.

### Federal Benefits

- Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act - \$328,612.73 awarded to beneficiary.
- Filing a claim – [www.psob.gov](http://www.psob.gov) or call 888-744-6513
- COBRA Act of 1985 – Guarantees that the employer of the deceased officer must make available to the surviving spouse and their dependent children the same type of health insurance as was provided prior to the officer's death. Coverage is available for up to 36 months.
- Public safety officers' educational assistance program – Tuition, defray educational expenses, including tuition, room and board, books, supplies, and education related fees. – [www.psob.gov](http://www.psob.gov) – 888-744-6513
- Wives Behind the Badge – Scholarships are open to the spouses/registered domestic partners and dependent children of local, state, and federal law enforcement officers. – [www.wivesbehindthebadge.org](http://www.wivesbehindthebadge.org) 661-202-8604
- One Time Death Benefit – In addition to the monthly benefits survivors receive, the deceased workers' eligible spouse is entitled to a one time death payment. If there is no such spouse, this payment can be made only to a child entitled to survivors benefits. 800-772-1213
- NRA Death Benefit – If a police officer, with or without compensation, is feloniously killed in the line of duty and is a current member of NRA, the surviving spouse/family is entitled to a \$25,000.00 death benefit. 877-672-3006
- Officer Down Memorial – [www.odmp.org](http://www.odmp.org)
- Go to the resource drop down section. Proceed to the survivor benefits section. Click on the State of Ohio, this area show all of the benefits and contact numbers.



# Los Angeles Police Department

## FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

### QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE UNIT

977 N. Broadway – Suite 409  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 485 – 0703  
(213) 485 – 7582 FAX



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# Line of Duty Death

Sworn • Level I and II Reserve Officers

- GENERAL DEATH NOTIFICATIONS
  - FAMILY
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OTHER
- INITIAL FUNERAL PLANNING (EAU PERSONNEL)
- EAU FACILITATES
  - CASKET ENGRAVING
  - FLAG CASE ENGRAVING
- DEATH & FUNERAL NOTICE & POSTING ON COP'S HOME PAGE
- ASSEMBLE / NOTIFY NEEDED RESOURCES INVOLVED IN THE FUNERAL
- COORDINATE & MANAGE INQUIRIES FOR
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OUTSIDE INQUIRIES
  - VIP'S / OTHER DIGNITARIES
- ORDER DEPARTMENT PHOTOS
  - SID PHOTOS - MOUNTED AND 8 X 10 PICTURES FOR FAMILY "FUNERAL PACKAGE"
- ENSURE UNIFORM FOR DECEASED (IF APPLICABLE) IS CORRECTLY DISPLAYED
- SET UP SERVICE LOCATION(S) – PILLAR FOR: PHOTO, GLOVES, HAT, BADGE, ETC.
- TRANSPORTATION / PARKING CONTROL - SES MOTORS
  - EAU MAKES INITIAL CONTACT / NOTIFICATION TO SES MOTORS
    - HANDLE OTHER AGENCY NOTIFICATION & LIAISON
    - FAMILY ESCORT FROM RESIDENCE OR STAGING LOCATION TO SERVICE(S)
    - CHURCH PARKING PLAN
    - DEVELOP MOTORCADE TO CEMETERY
    - CONDUCT MOTORCADE
    - CEMETERY PARKING PLAN
    - ESCORT FAMILY PKG. TO RECEPTION FOLLOWING GRAVESIDE
- NOTIFY RIDERLESS HORSE DETAIL
  - METROPOLITAN DIVISION – MOUNTED UNIT
- NOTIFY HONOR GUARD DETAIL
  - RIFLE VOLLEY
  - TAPS
  - FLAG FOLDING
  - FLAG CASE PRESENTATION
- NOTIFY AIR SUPPORT DIVISION
  - GROUND SUPPORT PERSONNEL
  - MISSING MAN FORMATION
- NOTIFY BAG PIPE PLAYER
  - GENERALLY – ONLY GRAVESIDE
- DEVELOP END OF WATCH BROADCAST
  - DIGITALLY RECORD "EOW" BROADCAST
- NOTIFY TV PHOTO AND SOUND UNIT
  - VIDEO & STILL PHOTOS OF ALL EVENTS
    - VIEWING / VISITATION
    - ROSARY (IF APPLICABLE)
    - FUNERAL SERVICES
    - BURIAL SERVICES
    - RECEPTION (OPTIONAL)

# Line of Duty Death

Sworn • Level I and II Reserve Officers

- PREPARE AUDIO EQUIPMENT FOR GRAVESIDE SERVICES – POSSIBLY UTILIZE GENERAL SERVICES AUDIO DEPARTMENT
  - P/A SYSTEM
  - MIC STAND
- CONDUCT “WALK THRU” FOR ALL CONCERNED ENTITIES
  - AT SERVICE SITE
  - AT CEMETERY / INTERMENT SITE
- DEVELOP “ORDER OF SERVICE” FOR ALL CONCERNED ENTITIES
- EAU PAPERWORK
  - FILE RELATED GRANTS / BENEFITS
    - FEDERAL
    - STATE
    - COUNTY
    - CITY
- NOTIFY NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MEMORIAL
  - WALL ENSCRIPTION
  - ADDITIONAL PAPERWORK
- NOTIFY LA CITY PERSONNEL FOR LAPD ENSCRIPTION
  - ARTC FACILITY
  - NEW LAPD ADMINISTRATION BUILDING / MONUMENT
- EAU – FOLLOW UP
  - LOCKER CLEAN OUT
  - EQUIPMENT TURN – IN
  - POLICE EQUIPMENT INVENTORY AND TURN - IN
  - BENEFICIARIES NOTIFIED
  - FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP NOTIFICATION
  - GRIEF ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS
  - FINANCIAL COUNSELING REFERRAL
  - BLUE RIBBON TRUST ACCOUNT – REFERRAL
  - WIDOW / WIDOWER ASSISTANCE (ON-GOING)
  - GRIEF BOOKS
    - MAIL OUT PERIODICALLY

## CRITERIA

1. OFFICER “ON-DUTY” STATUS
2. ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN APPREHENDING CRIMINAL(s)
3. CONFRONTING ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL CRIMINAL
4. DIES AS A RESULT OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY
5. PROTECTING OTHERS FROM SERIOUS HARM
6. PROTECTING ANOTHER OFFICER, EMERGENCY PERSONNEL OR CITIZEN WITHIN CALIFORNIA
7. “OFF-DUTY” ASSISTING CITIZEN OR EMERGENCY PERSONNEL OR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER OR AGENCY WITH CRIMINAL ACTIVITY.

# Active Officer Death

Sworn • Level I and II Reserve Officers

- GENERAL DEATH NOTIFICATIONS
  - FAMILY
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OTHER
- INITIAL FUNERAL PLANNING (EAU PERSONNEL)
- EAU FACILITATES
  - CASKET ENGRAVING
  - FLAG CASE ENGRAVING
- DEATH & FUNERAL NOTICE & POSTING ON COP'S HOME PAGE
- ASSEMBLE / NOTIFY NEEDED RESOURCES INVOLVED IN THE FUNERAL
- COORDINATE & MANAGE INQUIRIES FOR
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OUTSIDE INQUIRIES
  - VIP'S / OTHER DIGNITARIES
- ORDER DEPARTMENT PHOTOS
  - SID PHOTOS - MOUNTED AND 8 X 10 PICTURES FOR FAMILY "FUNERAL PACKAGE"
- ENSURE UNIFORM FOR DECEASED (IF APPLICABLE) IS CORRECTLY DISPLAYED
- SET UP SERVICE LOCATION(S) – PILLAR FOR: PHOTO, GLOVES, HAT, BADGE, ETC.
- TRANSPORTATION / PARKING CONTROL - SES MOTORS
  - EAU MAKES INITIAL CONTACT / NOTIFICATION TO SES MOTORS
    - HANDLE OTHER AGENCY NOTIFICATION & LIAISON (IF APPLICABLE)
    - FAMILY ESCORT FROM RESIDENCE OR STAGING LOCATION TO SERVICE(S)
    - CHURCH PARKING PLAN
    - CEMETERY PARKING PLAN
    - ESCORT FAMILY PKG. TO RECEPTION FOLLOWING GRAVESIDE
- NOTIFY HONOR GUARD DETAIL
  - RIFLE VOLLEY
  - TAPS
  - FLAG FOLDING
  - FLAG CASE PRESENTATION
- NOTIFY AIR SUPPORT DIVISION
  - GROUND SUPPORT PERSONNEL
  - SOLO AIRSHIP FLYOVER – DEPLOYMENT PERMITTING
- NOTIFY BAG PIPE PLAYER
  - GENERALLY – ONLY GRAVESIDE
- DEVELOP END OF WATCH BROADCAST
  - DIGITALLY RECORD "EOW" BROADCAST
- EAU TO SECURE PHOTOGRAPHER (EITHER DEPT. OR EAU PERSONNEL)
  - STILL PHOTOS OF ALL EVENTS
    - VIEWING / VISITATION
    - ROSARY (IF APPLICABLE)
    - FUNERAL SERVICES
    - BURIAL SERVICES
    - RECEPTION (OPTIONAL)
- PREPARE AUDIO EQUIPMENT FOR GRAVESIDE SERVICES – POSSIBLY UTILIZE GENERAL SERVICES AUDIO DEPARTMENT
  - P/A SYSTEM
  - MIC STAND

# Active Officer Death

Sworn • Level I and II Reserve Officers

- DEVELOP "ORDER OF SERVICE" FOR ALL CONCERNED ENTITIES
- EAU PAPERWORK
  - FILE RELATED SERVICE / DEPARTMENT PAPERWORK
- EAU – FOLLOW UP
  - LOCKER CLEAN OUT
  - EQUIPMENT TURN – IN
  - POLICE EQUIPMENT INVENTORY AND TURN - IN
  - BENEFICIARIES NOTIFIED
  - FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP NOTIFICATION
  - GRIEF ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS
  - FINANCIAL COUNSELING REFERRAL
  - BLUE RIBBON TRUST ACCOUNT – REFERRAL
  - WIDOW / WIDOWER ASSISTANCE (ON-GOING)
  - GRIEF BOOKS
    - MAIL OUT PERIODICALLY

## CRITERIA

1. ACCIDENTAL DEATH
2. NATURAL DEATH
3. SUICIDE
4. LONG TERM SICK OR IOD
5. LEAVE OF ABSENCE – WITH OR WITHOUT PAY
6. SUSPENSION – CASE BY CASE EVALUATION (REQUIRES CHIEF OF POLICE OR ASSISTANT CHIEF AUTHORIZATION)

### **SPECIAL NOTE**

NO ASSISTANCE PROVIDED WHEN THE MANNER OF DEATH IS A DIRECT RESULT OF SERIOUS MISCONDUCT OR CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

# Retired Officer Death

## Sworn

- GENERAL DEATH NOTIFICATIONS
  - FAMILY
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OTHER
- DEATH & FUNERAL NOTICE & POSTING ON COP'S HOME PAGE
- EAU FACILITATES
  - CASKET ENGRAVING
  - FLAG CASE ENGRAVING
- TELEPHONIC FUNERAL PLANNING / ARRANGEMENT ASSISTANCE
- EAU TO ASSIST OR FACILITATE
  - SECURE BAG PIPE PLAYER – POSSIBLE FEES / COST TO FAMILY
  - ONE HONOR GUARD MEMBER TO PRESENT PRE – FOLDED US FLAG (IF APPLICABLE)
    - LIMITED TO 100 MILE RADIUS OF DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES
- EAU TO ASSIST WITH SERVICES
  - ONLY IF REQUESTED BY FAMILY
  - NO OTHER PENDING COMMITMENTS

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **LAPD MEDAL OF VALOR RECIPIENTS**

- FULL HONOR GUARD
  - RIFLE VOLLEY
  - TAPS
  - FLAG FOLDING
  - FLAG CASE PRESENTATION
  - BAG PIPER
  - SINGLE AIR SHIP FLYOVER – DEPLOYMENT/ WEATHER PERMITTING
  - EAU PHOTOGRAPHS OF EVENTS – DEPLOYMENT PERMITTING
- SES MOTOR ESCORT (MAX. 100 MILE RADIUS)
  - PARKING PLANS AS NEEDED

### **CHIEF OF POLICE IN GOOD STANDING**

- FULL HONOR GUARD
  - RIFLE VOLLEY
  - TAPS
  - FLAG FOLDING
  - FLAG CASE PRESENTATION
  - BAG PIPER
  - SINGLE AIR SHIP FLYOVER – DEPLOYMENT/ WEATHER PERMITTING
  - EAU PHOTOGRAPHS OF EVENTS – DEPLOYMENT PERMITTING
- SES MOTOR ESCORT (MAX. 100 MILE RADIUS)
  - PARKING PLANS AS NEEDED

### CRITERIA

1. DEPENDANT UPON AVAILABILITY OF DEPARTMENT RESOURCES
2. ADEQUATE TIME TO PLAN / PREPARE
3. LOCAL SERVICES ONLY – 100 MILE RADIUS FROM DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES
4. PARTICIPATION REQUESTED FROM FAMILY

# Career Civilian Department Employee

Active Career Civilian • Civilian C/O's

- GENERAL DEATH NOTIFICATIONS
  - FAMILY
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OTHER
- INITIAL FUNERAL PLANNING (EAU PERSONNEL)
- EAU FACILITATES
  - CASKET ENGRAVING
  - FLAG CASE ENGRAVING (IF APPLICABLE)
- DEATH & FUNERAL NOTICE & POSTING ON COP'S HOME PAGE
- ASSEMBLE / NOTIFY NEEDED RESOURCES INVOLVED IN THE FUNERAL
- COORDINATE & MANAGE INQUIRIES FOR
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OUTSIDE INQUIRIES (IF APPLICABLE)
  - VIP'S / OTHER DIGNITARIES
- ORDER DEPARTMENT PHOTOS
  - SID PHOTOS - MOUNTED AND 8 X 10 PICTURES FOR FAMILY "FUNERAL PACKAGE"
- ENSURE UNIFORM FOR DECEASED (IF APPLICABLE) IS CORRECTLY DISPLAYED
- SET UP SERVICE LOCATION(s) – DEPT. PHOTO, ETC.
- TRANSPORTATION / PARKING CONTROL - SES MOTORS
  - EAU MAKES INITIAL CONTACT / NOTIFICATION TO SES MOTORS
    - FAMILY ESCORT FROM RESIDENCE OR STAGING LOCATION TO SERVICE(S)
    - CHURCH PARKING PLAN
    - CEMETERY PARKING PLAN
    - ESCORT FAMILY PKG. TO RECEPTION FOLLOWING GRAVESIDE
- EAU TO SECURE PHOTOGRAPHER (EITHER DEPT. OR EAU PERSONNEL)
  - STILL PHOTOS OF ALL EVENTS
    - VIEWING / VISITATION
    - ROSARY (IF APPLICABLE)
    - FUNERAL SERVICES
    - BURIAL SERVICES
    - RECEPTION (OPTIONAL)
- PREPARE AUDIO EQUIPMENT FOR GRAVESIDE SERVICES
  - P/A SYSTEM
  - MIC STAND
- PRESENTATION OF CITY FLAG TO FAMILY
- EAU – FOLLOW UP
  - GRIEF ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS
  - FINANCIAL COUNSELING REFERRAL
  - BLUE RIBBON TRUST ACCOUNT – REFERRAL (IF APPLICABLE)
  - GRIEF BOOKS
    - MAIL OUT PERIODICALLY

# Career Civilian Department Employee

Active Career Civilian • Civilian C/O's

## CRITERIA

1. CAREER CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES ARE DEFINED AS CIVILIANS ASIGNED TO THE DEPARTMENT WITH SEVEN OR MORE YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE
2. ACCIDENTAL DEATH
3. NATURAL DEATH
4. LONG TERM SICK OR IOD
5. LEAVE OF ABSENCE – CASE BY CASE EVALUATION

## SPECIAL NOTE

NO ASISTANCE PROVIDED WHEN THE MANNER OF DEATH IS THE DIRECT RESULT OF SERIOUS MISCONDUCT OR CRIMINAL ACTIVITY



# Family Member Death

Active Sworn • Active Career Civilian • Civilian C/O's

- GENERAL DEATH NOTIFICATIONS
  - FAMILY
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OTHER
- INITIAL FUNERAL PLANNING (EAU PERSONNEL)
- EAU FACILITATES
  - CASKET ENGRAVING (IF APPLICABLE OR REQUESTED)
  - FLAG CASE ENGRAVING (IF APPLICABLE)
- DEATH & FUNERAL NOTICE & POSTING ON COP'S HOME PAGE
- COORDINATE INVOLVED ENTITIES
- COORDINATE & MANAGE INQUIRIES FOR
  - DEPARTMENT
  - OUTSIDE INQUIRIES (IF APPLICABLE)
  - VIP'S / OTHER DIGNITARIES
- SET UP SERVICE LOCATION(S) – PHOTO, ETC.
- TRANSPORTATION / PARKING CONTROL - SES MOTORS
  - EAU MAKES INITIAL CONTACT / NOTIFICATION TO SES MOTORS
    - FAMILY ESCORT FROM RESIDENCE OR STAGING LOCATION TO SERVICE(S)
    - CHURCH PARKING PLAN
    - CEMETERY PARKING PLAN
    - ESCORT FAMILY PKG. TO RECEPTION FOLLOWING GRAVESIDE
- EAU TO SECURE PHOTOGRAPHER (EITHER DEPT. OR EAU PERSONNEL)
  - STILL PHOTOS OF ALL EVENTS
    - VIEWING / VISITATION
    - ROSARY (IF APPLICABLE)
    - FUNERAL SERVICES
    - BURIAL SERVICES
    - RECEPTION (OPTIONAL)
- PREPARE AUDIO EQUIPMENT FOR GRAVESIDE SERVICES
  - P/A SYSTEM
  - MIC STAND
- EAU – FOLLOW UP
  - GRIEF ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVORS & DIVISIONAL PERSONNEL (AS REQUESTED BY C/O)
  - FINANCIAL COUNSELING REFERRAL
  - BLUE RIBBON TRUST ACCOUNT – REFERRAL (IF APPLICABLE)
  - GRIEF BOOKS
    - MAIL OUT PERIODICALLY

## CRITERIA

1. FAMILY MEMBER DEATH IS DEFINED AND LIMITED TO A SURVIVING SPOUSE, DOMESTIC PARTNER OR MINOR DEPENDANT CHILD
2. NO CRIMINAL ACTIVITY INVOLVED
3. ACCIDENTAL DEATH
4. NATURAL DEATH
5. SUICIDE

## SPECIAL NOTE

NO ASISTANCE PROVIDED WHEN THE MANNER OF DEATH IS THE DIRECT RESULT OF SERIOUS MISCONDUCT OR CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

# Contact Numbers

REALTIME ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL RESPONSE (RACR)	(213) 978 - 6500
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE UNIT	(213) 485 - 0703
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE SERVICES	(213) 485 - 2620
CHAPLAIN COORDINATOR	(213) 473 - 6386
DEPARTMENT WELLNESS COORDINATOR	(213) 216 - 7009
POLICE PROTECTIVE LEAGUE	(213) 251 - 4554
POLICE RELIEF ASSOCIATION	(213) 674 - 3701
POLICE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION	(213) 847 - 4239
LAPD - RETIREMENT COUNSELOR	(213) 485 - 4054
ALL CITY BENEFITS - CIVILIANS	(213) 473 - 7200
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS - CIVILIANS	(213) 978 - 1655

# Terms / Definitions

## Career Civilian Employee

Defined as a City employee assigned to the Police Department with seven or more consecutive years of active employment

## Civilian C/O

Defined as any Police Department civilian employee holding the position of Commanding Officer. No minimum time limit is required to be eligible for assistance

## Family Member

Defined as a surviving spouse, registered domestic partner, minor dependant child



# Policy 1714



Subject	
<b>HONORING DECEASED PERSONNEL</b>	
Date Published	Page
<b>26 April 2017</b>	<b>1 of 12</b>

*By Order of the Police Commissioner*

## POLICY

1. **Standardized Response.** It is the policy of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) to provide detailed guidelines for the planning and implementation of police related funerals and to standardize the BPD response to the death of all active and retired members. The BPD will recognize three levels of services when conducting funerals.
2. **Efficiency.** When death occurs, BPD personnel face a myriad of tasks, to include the logistics of a large scale, public funeral. This policy will eliminate duplication of efforts; delineate responsibilities for those involved in the implementation; minimize confusion; and ensure the BPD presents families with well-organized and professional services.
3. **Employee Wellness.** Many members involved in BPD funerals will be close friends with the deceased. Carefully consider what effect their emotions may have on the performance of their duties. Carefully monitor members for signs of emotional distress.
4. **Appearance Standard.** Sworn members shall wear the BPD Class "A" dress uniform with eight point hat and white gloves when participating in Line-of-Duty Death services.
5. **Protocol.** Any deviation from this policy must be approved by the Police Commissioner or designee.

## DEFINITIONS

**Line-of-Duty Death** — A member (sworn or civilian) who lost his/her life in the performance of official duties.

**Non-Line-of-Duty Death** — An active-duty sworn member who lost his/her life in a manner that is not BPD-related.

**Civilian Employee Death** — A current civilian employee who lost his/her life in a manner that is not BPD-related.

**Casket Guard** — A vigil kept beside a deceased individual in ceremonial fashion by BPD members in Class "A" dress uniform with white gloves.

**Honor Guard** — A ceremonial unit that represents the Baltimore Police Department during events requiring formality and decorum.

**GENERAL****Line-of-Duty Death**Available Services Provided by the BPD for Line-of-Duty Deaths

1. Comprehensive assistance with the funeral arrangements, if desired, to include:
  - 1.1. Choosing the funeral home, location for the funeral, and a cemetery plot.
  - 1.2. If a burial in uniform is requested, assisting with obtaining the required uniform and accouterments from the Quartermaster and delivering them to the funeral home.
  - 1.3. A formal, ceremonial Casket Guard performed by members of the Honor Guard. The Casket Guard commences with the formal viewing at the church or funeral home.
  - 1.4. Honor Guard participation throughout the duration of the services, church and cemetery.
  - 1.5. Motorcycle escort for the family to and from the viewings, church, and cemetery.
  - 1.6. A formal police escort for the deceased from the funeral home to the church and cemetery.
  - 1.7. The following services will be provided at the cemetery, dependent upon the availability of specially trained personnel (perhaps from other police agencies or the military) to perform these functions:
    - 1.7.1. A bugler to play Taps;
    - 1.7.2. A bagpiper;
    - 1.7.3. A 21-gun salute;
    - 1.7.4. Helicopter fly-over; and
    - 1.7.5. Pallbearers
      - 1.7.5.1. Pallbearers will be staffed at the request of the family and may include friends or relatives of the deceased, but may also include members of the deceased officer's squad/shift/unit.
      - 1.7.5.2. Pallbearers shall be under the direction of the Honor Guard. The Honor Guard Commander will ensure that all non-Honor Guard pallbearers are properly instructed as to their duties prior to the funeral service.
      - 1.7.5.3. In the absence of volunteer pallbearers, Honor Guard personnel will perform this function.

**Member**

1. Affix a mourning band to the badge in accordance with procedures outlined in Appendix A.
2. Display, as desired, the Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbon according to procedures outlined in Appendix B.

**Supervisor**

Ensure mourning bands and Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons are properly and uniformly displayed.

**Commanding Officer**

1. When notified of a Line-of-Duty Death, verify with the Communications Section that other appropriate notifications are being made.
2. Ensure the Police Commissioner and the deceased member's Commanding Officer are notified.
3. Notify the deceased member's next of kin.
4. Provide and ensure transportation of the family to and from the appropriate medical facility. Upon their arrival, coordinate with the Employee/Retiree Affairs Unit (EAU) to provide accommodations and assistance as necessary for the family member(s).
5. Ensure appropriate clergy are notified. This should include notification to the Community Collaboration Division (CCD) and FOP Chaplaincy.
6. Coordinate with the Chief of Patrol to have a marked patrol unit escort the deceased to the Medical Examiner's Office and then back to the funeral home.
7. Unless otherwise requested by the family, attend funeral services and ensure attendance of a reasonable representation of supervisory personnel and police officers from the deceased member's assignment.
8. Make payroll/fiscal notification.
9. Ensure the deceased officer's family receives a courtesy call from your command on a monthly basis for the next six months.

**Employee and Retiree Affairs Unit**

1. Request the deceased's personal information from the deceased member's Commanding Officer and prepare a briefing sheet for Media Relations Section (MRS) and the Police Commissioner including:
  - 1.1. The deceased's name, rank, age, and length of service.
  - 1.2. Present assignment and duration.
  - 1.3. Family biographical information.

- 1.4. A brief synopsis of the circumstances surrounding the death.
2. Contact the deceased member's family and provide assistance as necessary regarding funeral arrangements. Advise the family of the services provided by the BPD for the deceased officer's funeral.
3. Coordinate the planning, logistics, and operation of the funeral in partnership with the Professional Development and Training Academy (PDTA), MRS, Honor Guard Coordinator, Special Operations Section (SOS), and the deceased's Command including:
  - 3.1. Coordination of all Honor Guard duties. When logistically possible this shall include the escort of the officer's body to the Medical Examiner's Office and funeral home.
  - 3.2. Motorcycle escort for the family to and from the funeral home, church, and cemetery.
  - 3.3. Pallbearers
  - 3.4. Patrol car procession
  - 3.5. Taps and/or a bagpiper (if personnel are available)
  - 3.6. A 21-gun salute (if personnel are available)
  - 3.7. Helicopter fly-over (if available)
  - 3.8. Fire Department for "Crossed Ladders" at the cemetery.
4. Ensure proper decorum and procedures are maintained in honoring the deceased member.
5. Prepare an NCIC notification in the name of the Police Commissioner containing the following information:
  - 5.1. Name of deceased officer
  - 5.2. Date, time, and location of the funeral
  - 5.3. Authorized uniform
  - 5.4. How expressions of sympathy may be made
  - 5.5. Instructions that all agencies sending Honor Guards must contact the Honor Guard Commander.
6. Contact the appropriate branch of the Armed Forces and coordinate their involvement if the deceased was a military veteran, and if the family desires military participation.
7. Order a high quality flower wreath reserved exclusively for Line-of-Duty Deaths.
8. Complete a written itinerary for the viewing and funeral services, and provide continuous updates to Command and the family members.

9. Coordinate with the Property Management Section to ensure:
  - 9.1. Headquarters and the district station or unit to which the deceased member was assigned are draped in black bunting for 30 days.
  - 9.2. All BPD flags are flown at half-staff for 30 days.
10. Coordinate with any neighboring jurisdictions and arrange for assistance if the services extend beyond Baltimore City.
11. Coordinate with the Department of Transportation if traffic cones, barricades, or Public Works vehicles are needed.
12. Arrange for the use of a radio channel with the Communications Section, if needed.
13. Coordinate with the family to obtain a uniform and accouterments from the Quartermaster if the family desires a burial in uniform.
14. Arrange for a paramedic unit to be present at the church and cemetery.
15. Obtain, prepare, and submit the forms and supporting documents needed by the appropriate agencies for processing and payment to the deceased member's beneficiary. Benefits and honors may be available from the following agencies:
  - 15.1. Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (Federal benefits)
  - 15.2. Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (Maryland State benefits)
  - 15.3. TASER Foundation (Memorial Grant)
  - 15.4. Honoring Every Responsible Officer's Eternal Sacrifice, Inc. (HEROES) Package
  - 15.5. Concerns of Police Survivors (information submission only)
  - 15.6. National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial (information submission only)
  - 15.7. American Police Hall of Fame and Museum
  - 15.8. Fire and Police Retirement Systems
  - 15.9. Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #3 Death Benefit
  - 15.10. City of Baltimore Life Insurance Benefit
  - 15.11. Baltimore City Police Department Death Relief Fund

**NOTE:** The Benefits Coordinator may request assistance from Fiscal Services with completing the above documents.



**Chief, Criminal Investigation Division (CID)****Chief, Special Operations & Development Division (SODD)**

1. Ensure the family of the deceased member is given a detailed account of the incident that led to the member's death.
2. In the case of a death by motor vehicle accident and the investigation is handled by Crash Team personnel, these duties and those listed below will fall to the Chief, Special Operations & Development Division (SODD). If there are certain details that will be withheld for legal or prosecutorial reasons, this will be explained to the family.
3. Keep the family informed of all legal proceedings.
4. Assign a supervisor/detective to notify the family of all upcoming court proceedings.
5. Assign a supervisor/detective to accompany the family to court.

**NOTE:** This function may be fulfilled by the EAU detective, with the permission of his/her commander.

6. Suggest the portions of the proceedings/trial to which the family may not want to be privy due to the content of the testimony or evidence being presented.

**Deputy Police Commissioner**

1. Act as an overall liaison between the impacted divisions to ensure the needs of the deceased member's family, employees, and the agency are met.
2. Be available to the impacted commanders as an additional resource.
3. Ensure psychological support services are available to the family members of the deceased and to any affected members of the BPD.

**Office of the Police Commissioner**

1. Ensure prompt notification to the Mayor.
2. As soon as practicable, send an initial email for department-wide distribution containing the information listed above, in order to promptly notify departmental employees. This email shall also authorize the wearing of mourning ribbons/bands, and order that flags at police facilities be flown at half-staff. These orders will remain in effect for 30 days from the date of the member's death.
3. Arrange a meeting between EAU and the deceased member's next of kin.
4. Determine if any BPD honors (posthumous awards or promotions) are to be awarded to the deceased, and arrange for the proper presentations.

**NOTE:** When plaques, memorabilia, or awards are given to the surviving spouse or other family member, ensure identical items are also made for the deceased's parents.

5. Obtain a roster of all represented departments at the funeral from the SOS Commander and acknowledge their participation with letters of appreciation.
6. Ensure that the deceased officer's family receives a courtesy call from the Office of the Police Commissioner on a monthly basis for the next six months.

### **Non-Line-of-Duty Death**

Departmental participation in the funeral will be limited to the following:

1. Motorcycle escort for the deceased and family from the funeral service to the cemetery.
2. A ceremonial Honor Guard at the cemetery.

### **Unit Commander**

1. When notified of the Non-Line-of-Duty Death of an active-duty sworn member, the Unit Commander will verify with the Communications Section that other appropriate notifications are being made.
2. Contact the family as soon as practical, and determine their wishes regarding the BPD's participation in the funeral of the deceased.
3. Immediately notify EAU.
4. Do not discuss any details regarding the BPD's participation in the deceased's funeral. EAU will contact the family and brief them on the services provided to the deceased and the family by the BPD.
5. Coordinate with the appropriate Division Chief to ensure replacement officers work in place of the deceased officer's squad/shift and provide coverage, if necessary, for the affected entity for the day of the funeral.

### **Employee Affairs Unit**

1. Provide any reasonable assistance to the family, to include referrals to the FOP, Police Psychologist, or Police Chaplain.
2. Coordinate with the deceased member's command to provide pallbearers, if BPD participation is desired.
3. Arrange to obtain a uniform and all the required accouterments from the Quartermaster, if a burial in uniform is desired.
4. Initiate a follow-up email detailing funeral arrangements.

**Commander, Special Operations Section**

1. Provide logistical support (e.g., motors escort, funeral procession traffic control, Honor Guard, etc.) when services are requested by EAU.
2. Coordinate the assistance of any neighboring jurisdictions if the services extend beyond Baltimore City and traffic congestion is anticipated.

**Deputy Police Commissioner**

1. Act as an overall liaison between the impacted units/entities to ensure the needs of the deceased member's family, employees, and the agency are met.
2. Provide additional resources and support to the impacted units/entities when requested.
3. Ensure psychological support services are available to the family members of the deceased and to any affected members of the BPD.

**Office of the Police Commissioner**

1. Ensure notification is made to the Mayor.
2. Send an initial email for department-wide distribution in order to promptly notify BPD employees of the member's death.
3. Ensure the deceased officer's family receives a courtesy call from the Office of the Police Commissioner, at least monthly, for the next three months.

**Suicide – Sworn Officer Active Member**

Arrangements and honors shall be coordinated the same as a Sworn Non-Line-of-Duty Death unless the suicide involves felonious acts or would bring dishonor to the BPD.

**Civilian Employee Death****Employee Affairs Unit**

1. Contact the deceased's family to determine whether BPD participation in the funeral is desired.
2. Provide a uniform and accouterments from the Quartermaster if requested.
3. Coordinate a funeral escort with the Motors Unit if staffing and logistics allow for it and upon request from the family.

**Office of the Police Commissioner**

1. Send an initial email for department-wide distribution in order to promptly notify BPD employees of the member's death.

2. Ensure the deceased employee's family receives a courtesy call from the Office of the Police Commissioner, at least monthly, for the next three months.

**Retired Officer's Death****Employee Affairs Unit**

1. Contact the deceased's family to determine whether departmental participation in the funeral is desired.
2. Arrangements may be made via telephone.
3. Initiate a BPD email notifying members of the death and funeral services.
4. Provide Motor Unit escort, if available, from the church or service location to the burial site.

**APPENDICES**

- A. Mourning Band
- B. Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbon
- C. Honoring Deceased Personnel Checklist Form, 1714.

**ASSOCIATED POLICY**

Policy 507, *Honor Guard*

**RESCISSION**

Remove from files and destroy/recycle General Order Q-14, *Uniform Guidelines for Honoring Deceased Personnel*, dated 22 March 2001 and PCM 05-08 Honoring Deceased Personnel.

**COMMUNICATION OF POLICY**

This policy is effective on the date listed herein. Each employee is responsible for complying with the contents of this policy.

**APPENDIX A****MOURNING BAND**

The mourning band is a black elastic material one-half-inch in width placed around the badge as shown. Tape or other adhesive material shall not be used.

**REQUIRED ACTION****Member**

Display the mourning band on the badge for the death of:

1. An active member of the BPD, sworn or civilian, who died as the result of injuries sustained while in the performance of duty - 30 days from the date of death.
2. An active member of the BPD, sworn or civilian, who died of natural causes or of injuries not received while in the performance of public duty - seven days from the date of death.

**NOTE:** The Police Commissioner may direct that a mourning band be worn by additional members, worn for alternate lengths of time, or worn for an extraordinary circumstance, such as the death of an active Federal, State, or City official.

**Commanding Officer, Quartermaster Unit**

1. Maintain sufficient quantities of mourning bands.
2. Provide mourning bands on a requisitioned basis.

**APPENDIX B****FALLEN HERO MEMORIAL RIBBON**

Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons honor members of the BPD whose death occurs in the line-of-duty. A Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbon shall be embossed with the fallen member's name and rank. The Ribbon(s) will be worn on a single line, centered ¼ inch under the badge. Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons may be displayed for as long as individually desired.

**REQUIRED ACTION****Member**

1. When in uniform may display a maximum of two Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons.

**NOTE:** The display of the Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbon does not affect the existing policy and procedure regarding the display of the black mourning band on the badge.

**Commanding Officer, Quartermaster Unit**

1. Upon notification of the line-of-duty death of a member, ensure an appropriate quantity of Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons are obtained.
2. Issue Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons in a timely manner to the fallen member's Commanding Officer for distribution to personnel of that Command.
3. Maintain a limited number of Fallen Hero Memorial Ribbons.

**APPENDIX C**

**Honoring Deceased Personnel Checklist**



**Honoring Deceased Personnel Checklist**

Funeral Service For: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Form 1714

	<b>Item</b>	<b>ASSIGNED TO</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
1.	Funeral Detail <i>(Uniformed Personnel)</i>		
2.	Funeral Home Liaison		
3.	Cemetery Site		
4.	EMS		
5.	Family Liaison		
6.	Logistics		
7.	Reception/Food		
8.	Honor Guard		
9.	Media Information		
10.	Transportation		
11.	Designated Rooms <i>(Family and Dignitaries Honor Guard Preparation)</i>		
12.	Meeting Area <i>(Away from funeral site for all uniformed personnel to assemble)</i>		
13.	Active Pallbearers		
14.	Honorary Pallbearers <i>(Family, Officers, Retirees, etc.)</i>		
15.	Support Group		
16.	Chaplain		



# Model Policy

<i>Effective Date</i> April 2005		<i>Number</i>	
<i>Subject</i> Mutual Aid			
<i>Reference</i>		<i>Special Instructions</i>	
<i>Distribution</i>		<i>Reevaluation Date</i>	<i>No. Pages</i> 5

## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to inform all personnel of the existence and contents of the interagency mutual aid agreement [the “Agreement”] and this law enforcement department’s obligations under the Agreement.

## II. POLICY

This interagency assistance policy as defined in the Agreement is intended to define the capabilities and obligations of participating departments to respond to emergency situations outside their own jurisdiction. This department shall participate in the interagency Agreement in order to strengthen our collective response to emergency situations.

## III. DEFINITIONS

*Emergency:* Any occurrence, or threat thereof, whether natural or caused by man, in war or in peace, which results or may result in substantial injury or harm to the population, substantial damage to or loss of property, or substantial harm to the environment and is beyond the capacity of an individual department to effectively control.

*Mutual Aid:* As used herein, mutual aid refers to the provision and receipt of assistance between departments that are signatories to the mutual aid agreement in response to a formal request for assistance from an authorized departmental officer and dealing with an emergency as defined in the Agreement. It does not include assistance to other jurisdictions wherein officers are automatically dispatched under terms of a contract or informal agreement between jurisdictions.

## IV. PROCEDURES

### A. Scope of Agreement

1. The law enforcement departments in the region and their governing bodies, in accordance with state law and local authorization, have entered into a cooperative mutual aid agreement whereby each may request temporary emergency assistance from any or all other member departments.
2. The Agreement may be invoked by authorized personnel from member departments during emergencies, as defined herein.
3. Under the terms of the Agreement, this department is committed to providing personnel, equipment, and specialized units to a participating department to the extent that it will not endanger primary law enforcement services to this jurisdiction.
4. In order to maintain the efficient implementation of the Agreement, the chief executive officer (CEO) or his or her designee will have the following responsibilities:
  - a. Attend regular meetings with other member department representatives to formulate or revise emergency plans, share information, and assess the general emergency needs of the region.
  - b. Provide data to member departments concerning this department’s available manpower per shift, equipment and specialized units, and receive similar information from the other member departments.
  - c. Negotiate additions to or renewal of the Agreement.



5. The costs of salaries or wages, pensions, relief and workers' compensation for loaned personnel resulting from mutual assistance duty, shall be allocated according to the Agreement.

B. Requests for Assistance

1. Requests for assistance by this department shall be forwarded to the authorized command officer in a timely manner through the chain of command.
2. Before requesting assistance from another department, the command officer shall ascertain the following:
  - a. nature of the emergency
  - b. measures taken to bring the situation under control and why they have proven insufficient
  - c. estimates of the amount of equipment, personnel, or special units that will be necessary to bring the situation under control
3. Requests may be made by telephone or in writing and are subject to confirmation.
4. The requesting department is responsible for providing member departments with the information necessary to determine the type and amount of assistance required.
5. Each member department is only committed to providing assistance to the extent that it does not endanger primary operations and may, with proper notice, withdraw loaned personnel or equipment where circumstances require redeployment in their jurisdiction.
6. All member departments, whether or not requested to provide assistance, shall remain on alert status during the term of the emergency.

C. Emergency Scene Responsibilities

1. The designated supervisor of the requesting department shall be in charge at the emergency site. All loaned personnel shall follow his or her lawful orders. However, where the provided assistance involves the loan of a specialized SWAT, hostage negotiation, bomb disposal, or canine unit, the commander of that specialized unit shall be responsible for implementation of the mission, as determined by the incident commander of the requesting department.
2. When taking law enforcement actions at the emergency site, including uses of force, officers from this department shall at all times adhere to this department's policies and procedures and utilize only those weapons and tactics that they have been trained and deemed qualified to use.

3. Officers on loan from the responding department at an emergency site shall regularly apprise our communications section concerning the continued status of the emergency, line-of-duty injuries, or their need for relief.

Every effort has been made by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no "model" policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities among other factors.

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# Sample Mutual Aid Agreement

## April 2005

THIS MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT MADE AND ENTERED INTO BY AND BETWEEN

(POLITICAL SUBDIVISION PARTIES TO AGREEMENT)

### WITNESSETH

**Whereas**, the law of the State of \_\_\_\_\_ provides that each political subdivision within the State of \_\_\_\_\_ is empowered to make and enter into mutual aid agreements with other contiguous political subdivisions within the State in order to more effectively allocate law enforcement and other public safety services during emergency situations;

**Whereas**, the undersigned political subdivisions that are parties to this mutual aid agreement must confront numerous threats to public health and safety, including but not limited to natural or manmade disasters;

**Whereas**, none of the departments party to this Agreement possesses all of the necessary resources to cope with every possible law enforcement emergency or disaster by itself, and an effective, efficient response can best be achieved by the application and leveraging of the collective resources of these departments;

**Whereas**, the parties to this Agreement have determined that it is in their collective best interest to develop and implement comprehensive preparedness plans and conduct joint exercises in advance of a sudden and immediate need in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their response to any emergency or disaster;

**Whereas**, it is desirable that each of the parties hereto should voluntarily aid and assist each other in the event that an emergency situation should occur, by the interchange of law enforcement services; and

**Whereas**, it is necessary and desirable that a mutual aid agreement be executed for the interchange of such mutual assistance on a local, county, and/or regional basis;

**Now, therefore**, it is hereby agreed by and between each and all of the parties hereto as follows:

### Article I: Definitions

*Assisting Department:* A law enforcement department providing law enforcement manpower, equipment, and resources to a police department from another jurisdiction that has requested assistance to confront an emergency.

*Requesting Department:* A law enforcement department under an emergency condition that has requested assistance from a law enforcement department participating in the regional mutual aid agreement.

*Emergency:* Any occurrence, or threat thereof, whether natural or caused by man, in war or in peace, which results or may result in substantial injury or harm to the population, substantial damage to or loss of property, or substantial harm to the environment and is beyond the capacity of an individual department to effectively control.

*Mutual Aid:* A prearranged written agreement and plan whereby assistance is requested and provided between two or more jurisdictions during a designated emergency under terms of the agreement.

*Staging Area:* A location identified outside the immediate emergency area where law enforcement equipment and personnel assemble for briefing, assignment, and related matters.

*Authorized Representative:* The chief executive officer (CEO) of a participating law enforcement department, or his or her designee, who has authorization to request, offer, or provide assistance under the terms of this Agreement.

*Period of Assistance:* The period of time beginning with the departure of any personnel and/or equipment of the assisting party from any point for the purpose of traveling to provide assistance exclusively to the requesting department, and ending on the return of all of the assisting party's personnel and equipment to their regular place of work or assignment.

## **Article II: Terms of the Agreement**

1. Each party agrees that in the event of an emergency situation, each other party to this mutual aid agreement will furnish such personnel, equipment, facilities, or services as are available, provided that such actions would not unreasonably diminish its capacity to provide basic police services.
2. Each party shall designate the appropriate official within its jurisdiction who has the legal authority to bind its jurisdiction to this Agreement, and who shall sign this Agreement.
3. In order to invoke assistance under the provisions of this Agreement, the designated official from the requesting party shall be required to contact the designated official of the responding party by telephone or in writing. The responding party may request such information from the requesting party as is necessary to confirm the emergency situation and to assess the types and amounts of assistance that shall be provided.
4. During an emergency situation, all personnel from responding departments shall report to and shall work under the direction of the designated incident commander. Personnel from either the requesting or the assisting department may receive supervision from any command personnel from the combined participating localities if authorized by the incident commander or his or her designee in the incident command structure, depending on identified needs and available resources deemed most qualified to meet mission goals and objectives. Tactical teams (e.g., bomb disposal, canine teams, special weapons and tactics units), once they are authorized to undertake assignments, shall operate under the direction of their tactical commander.
5. Personnel responding to a call for assistance outside their appointed jurisdiction shall have those law enforcement powers provided for by State law.
6. In any emergency situation where the mutual aid agreement has been invoked, radio communications should be established between all of the parties, where possible, through the use of the local public mutual aid radio system or other shared communication system.
7. The departments agree to reimburse assisting departments for the costs of personnel, equipment, facilities, and related resources used during the period of assistance on the basis of mutually accepted costs associated with these resources.
8. **Liability, Workers' Compensation, Property Damage**
  - a. **Workers' Compensation Coverage:** Each member political subdivision will be responsible for its own actions and those of its employees and is responsible for complying with the State of \_\_\_\_\_ Workers' Compensation Act. Coverage under this Act may be obtained (1) by a policy with an insurance company licensed to do business in the State of \_\_\_\_\_, (2) by being a qualified self-insured, or (3) by being a member of a group self-insurance association. Each member political subdivision should understand that workers' compensation coverage does not automatically extend to volunteers. Each local government may obtain accident insurance for any volunteer at the locality's discretion. Workers' compensation coverage for certain volunteers (e.g., volunteer fire fighters, volunteer lifesaving or volunteer rescue squad members, volunteer law enforcement chaplains, auxiliary or reserve police, auxiliary or reserve deputy sheriffs, volunteer emergency medical technicians, and members of volunteer search and rescue organizations) may be obtained by adding this exposure to the locality's workers compensation coverage. As an alternative, the individual volunteer company may obtain workers' compensation insurance coverage for this exposure.
  - b. **Automobile Liability Coverage:** Each member locality is responsible for its own actions and is responsible for complying with the State of motor vehicle financial responsibility laws. Coverage under these laws may be obtained (1) by a policy with an insurance company licensed to do business in the State of \_\_\_\_\_, by being a qualified self-insured, or (3) by being a member of a group self-insurance association. Each member locality agrees to obtain automobile liability coverage with at least a \$\_\_\_\_\_ combined single limit and coverage extended to owned, nonowned, and hired vehicles. It is understood that the local government may include in the emergency response volunteer companies that have motor vehicles titled in the name of the volunteer company. It is the responsibility of the member locality to determine if the volunteer company has automobile liability coverage as outlined in this section. This provision is met by being a qualified self-insured or by being a member of a group self-insurance association.
  - c. **General Liability, Public Officials Liability, and Law Enforcement Liability:** To the extent permitted by law and without waiving sovereign immunity, each party to this Agreement will be responsible for any and all claims, demands, suits, actions, damages, and causes for action related to or arising out of or in

any way connected with its own actions and the actions of its personnel in providing mutual aid assistance rendered or performed pursuant to the terms and conditions of this Agreement. Each member locality agrees to obtain general liability with at least a \$\_\_\_\_\_ combined single limit. Each member locality agrees to obtain public official liability coverage and law enforcement liability coverage with at least a \$\_\_\_\_\_ combined single limit. These coverages may be obtained (1) by a policy with an insurance company licensed to do business in the State of \_\_\_\_\_, (2) by being a qualified self-insured, (3) by being a member of a group self-insurance association, or (4) by any insurance plan administered through the Department of General Services Division of Risk Management.

- d. Should there be a dispute as to the nature and extent of any provision, these issues shall be submitted to binding arbitration with the American Arbitration Association or any other arbitration association unani- mously agreed to by the parties.
9. Each party shall develop and update on a regular basis a plan providing for the effective mobilization of its resources and facilities.
10. Interagency assistance plans shall be developed and updated on a regular basis by the parties hereto and are operative between the parties in accordance with the provisions of such plans.
11. The parties agree to meet on a regular basis to review all interagency assistance plans and the provisions of this Agreement.
12. This Agreement shall become effective as to each party's political subdivision when approved and execut- ed by that political subdivision. The Agreement shall remain in effect as between each and every party until participation in this Agreement is terminated by the party. Termination of participation in this Agreement by a party shall not affect the continued operation of this Agreement as between the remaining parties. Any party to this Agreement may terminate participation in this Agreement upon thirty days' written notice addressed to the designated public official of each of the other signatory political subdivisions that are parties to this Agree- ment. This Agreement is binding on future CEOs of participating departments unless affirmative measures have been taken to terminate the Agreement as defined herein.
13. The execution of this Agreement shall not give rise to any liability or responsibility for failure to respond to any request for assistance made pursuant to this Agreement. This Agreement shall not be construed as or deemed to be an Agreement for the benefit of any third party or parties, and no third party or parties shall have any right of action whatsoever hereunder for any cause whatsoever.

In witness whereof, this Agreement has been executed and approved and is effective and operative as to each of the parties as herein provided.

Signature & Title\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Signature & Title\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

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## ABOUT BJA

BJA is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics; National Institute of Justice; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; Office for Victims of Crime; and Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.

BJA provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. BJA supports programs and initiatives in the areas of law enforcement, justice information sharing, countering terrorism, managing offenders, combating drug crime and abuse, adjudication, advancing tribal justice, crime prevention, protecting vulnerable populations, and capacity building. Driving BJA's work in the field are the following principles:

- Emphasize local control
- Build relationships in the field
- Provide training and technical assistance in support of efforts to prevent crime, drug abuse, and violence at the national, state, and local levels
- Develop collaborations and partnerships
- Promote capacity building through planning
- Streamline the administration of grants
- Increase training and technical assistance
- Create accountability for projects
- Encourage innovation
- Communicate the value of justice efforts to decision makers at every level

To learn more about BJA, visit [www.bja.gov](http://www.bja.gov), or follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/DOJBJA](https://www.facebook.com/DOJBJA)) and Twitter (@DOJBJA). BJA is part of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

## ABOUT THE SAFLEO PROGRAM

Effective suicide prevention training must have a comprehensive approach focusing on occupational risks and support from law enforcement agencies, colleagues, families, and friends. To combat law enforcement suicide, agencies must place a priority on officer wellness with the same level of attention as tactical training. This goes beyond being just an agency responsibility; we all must place this issue as a priority—it is critical and could mean the difference between life and death.

The SAFLEO Program **goes beyond traditional law enforcement training by:**

- Incorporating emerging techniques relating to learning and behavior change in the development of curricula and publications
- Streamlining training visuals and developing imagery-driven and interactive presentations
- Providing numerous eLearning opportunities to regularly reinforce learning concepts
- Using the latest research in suicide ideation, root causes of officer suicide, risks, protective factors, and awareness
- Collaborating with organizations that share a common interest to #SmashTheStigma around law enforcement, mental wellness, and suicide

To learn more about SAFLEO, visit [www.safleo.org](http://www.safleo.org), and follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@SAFLEOprogram).





“You have but one opportunity to do the right thing,  
to represent our profession, your agency, and care for a grieving family.

**THIS FAMILY IS STILL ‘OUR’ FAMILY.”**

Officer Dan Foley (Retired)  
*Wyandotte, Michigan, Police Department*