

	LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT Ardmore, Pennsylvania	
	Policy 3.3.16	
Subject:		Distribution:
Line of Duty Death/Serious Injury		All Personnel
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By Authority of:		
		Superintendent of Police

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this policy to establish uniform and professional guidelines which provide prompt notification to the family of an officer who dies or is critically injured in the line of duty.

POLICY

The following procedures should be adhered to in cases of line of duty deaths and in cases of critically injured officers. These procedures should be followed whenever possible with the understanding that the wishes of the family take precedence over the desires of the agency, when feasible. Officers providing services and assistance to family members and survivors shall take all possible measures to accommodate their needs, but should not make promises to family members that they are not sure can be met.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Emergency contact form** – Form S&I 26 that contains emergency contact information and next of kin notification instructions. NOTE: Completed forms are kept in the “Emergency Phone Numbers” binder in the Communications Center and Staff & Inspections Unit.
- B. Line of Duty Death** – The death of an active duty officer by felonious or accidental means during the course of performing police functions while on duty.
- C. Survivors** – Immediate family members of the deceased officer to include spouse, children, parents, siblings, fiancée, and/or significant others.

PROCEDURES

- A.** Once a Patrol Sergeant has been notified of the incident he/she shall be responsible for the following:
1. Notifying a Command Staff member of the incident and to have them initiate the Notification Team.
 2. Notifying the Investigations Unit Supervisor to respond.
 3. Assigning an officer to escort emergency personnel to the hospital and safeguard the injured officer's property.
- B.** The name of the deceased officer shall not be released to the media or other parties before immediate survivors living in the area are notified.
- C.** Notification of the immediate family should be made as soon as possible. A Notification Team will be appointed by the Superintendent of Police, or the highest ranking member of the department available at the time of the incident. The Notification Team will include a minimum of three (3) or more of the following representatives:
1. The Superintendent of Police, or designee. At minimum the Command Staff representative will be a lieutenant.
 2. A member of the Lower Merion Police Department's Critical Incident Stress Management team (CISM team).
 3. An employee, sworn or civilian, who knows the family and is considered a family friend.
 4. An Executive Board member of the Fraternal Order of Police, if available, to respond within 30 minutes of being contacted.
- D.** If the opportunity to transport the family to the hospital exists prior to the officer's death, the Notification Team shall drive the family to the hospital. In such cases immediate transportation should be provided for survivors rather than waiting for any other members of departmental delegation to arrive.
- E.** Once the Notification Team has been designated, the team will respond to the family's location in two or more vehicles. This is so one vehicle may stay at the residence, if need be, and the other vehicle(s) can transport family members to the hospital.
1. If it is known that any member of the family to be notified has a serious medical condition, medical personnel should be summoned to respond with the team prior to making contact. Medical personnel should remain in close proximity to the location. However they are not required to be with the team and family unless their assistance is necessary.

2. Notifications should not be made at the door. Notifications should be made inside once the family has been seated.
 3. Notifications should be made in a clear and slow voice. The family should be given a description of the occurrence and the officer's name should be used at all times instead of him/her. The officer's exact medical condition at the time of the notification should be clearly explained.
- F.** The Notification Team shall be responsible for identification of additional survivors outside the area and shall make any notifications as desired by the immediate family. Such notifications shall be made by contacting the law enforcement agency in that jurisdiction and requesting that a personal notification be made.
- G.** The Notification Team shall submit a written report to the Superintendent of Police specifying the identity, time and place of survivors notified.
- H.** Communication of information concerning the officer and the incident shall, whenever possible, be restricted to the telephone to avoid interception by the media or others. In the case that the media obtains the officer's name prematurely, the ranking officer should request that the information be withheld until proper notification of survivors can be made.

ASSISTING SURVIVORS at the HOSPITAL

- A.** Whenever possible, the Superintendent of Police shall join the family at the hospital in order to emphasize the agency's support. The next highest ranking officer to arrive at the hospital shall serve as or designate a Hospital Liaison officer who shall be responsible for coordinating the arrival of immediate survivors, departmental personnel, the media and others. The Hospital Liaison shall also assume the following responsibilities:
1. Arrange for waiting facilities for immediate survivors and a press staging area.
 2. Ensure that medical personnel provide pertinent medical information on the officer's condition to the family before any other parties.
 3. Assist family members, in accordance with their desires, in gaining access to the injured or deceased officer.
 4. Provide hospital personnel with all necessary information on billing for medical services. The Hospital Liaison Officer should ensure that all medical bills are directed to the appropriate departmental authority and that they are not forwarded to the officer's family or other survivors.
 5. Arrange transportation for the family and other survivors upon their departure from the hospital.

6. Ensure that immediate family members are provided with the appropriate assistance at the hospital.

APPOINTMENT OF PERSONNEL

- A. The Superintendent of Police or his/her designee shall appoint officers to begin serving in the following capacities; Departmental Liaison, Funeral Liaison, Benefits Coordinator, and Family Support Advocate. These assignments will be made in writing to departmental personnel and notification of the assignments will be provided to the surviving family members.

1. Departmental Liaison:

The Department Liaison Officer will serve as a facilitator between the family and the Department. The Officer appointed should be a Command Staff member in order to expedite the tasks of employing departmental resources and the delegation of assignments. This Officer will work closely with the Funeral Liaison Officer to ensure that the needs and requests of the family are fulfilled. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Providing oversight of travel and lodging arrangements for out-of-town family members.
- b. Identifying alternative Churches and Reception Halls that will accommodate the law enforcement funeral. These alternatives will be presented to the family, who will make the final determination.
- c. Coordinating all official law enforcement notifications and arrangements to include the honor guard, pallbearers, traffic control, and liaison with visiting law enforcement agencies.
- d. Assisting family members in dealing with general media inquiries and informing them of limitations on what they can or should specifically say to the media.
- e. Providing liaison with the media to include coordination of any statements and press conferences. The Departmental Liaison shall also ensure that members of the agency are aware of restrictions regarding release of any information that might undermine future legal proceedings.
- f. Ensuring that security checks at the survivors' residence are initiated immediately following the incident and for as long as necessary thereafter, whatever the jurisdiction.

2. Funeral Liaison

The Funeral Liaison Officer acts as the facilitator between the decedent officer's family and the department during the funeral services. The Funeral Liaison Officer is responsible for:

- a. Meeting with the family members and explaining his/her responsibilities to them.
- b. Being available to the family prior to, and throughout the wake and funeral.
- c. Ensuring that the needs and wishes of the family come before those of the department.
- d. Relaying any information to the family concerning the circumstances of the decedent officer's death and appropriate information regarding any investigation.
- e. Determining the need for travel arrangements for out-of-town family members and any other special needs of the family during the funeral and reporting this information to the Department Liaison.
- f. Briefing the family on the procedures for a law enforcement funeral.

3. Benefits Liaison

The Benefits Liaison is responsible for:

- a. Coordinating all benefits paperwork between the Human Resources Department and the family.
- b. Preparing all documentation of benefits and payments due to survivors to include the nature and amount of benefits to be received by each beneficiary, the schedule of payments, and the name of a contact person or facilitator at each benefit or payment office.
- c. Maintaining contact with the family in order to ensure that benefits are being received. A copy of benefits documentation should be provided and explained to all survivors affected.
- d. Documenting inquiries and interest in public donations to the family and establishing a mechanism for receipt of such contributions, when appropriate.
- e. Advising the family of the role of police associations and organizations and the nature of support programs that they sponsor for law enforcement survivors.

4. Family Support Advocate

The family support advocate serves in a long-term liaison and support capacity for the surviving family; the responsibilities include:

- a.** Explaining the nature of the criminal proceedings, introducing them to prosecutors and others as required, and accompanying them to the proceedings.
 - b.** Identifying all support services available to family members and working on their behalf to secure any services necessary.
 - c.** Maintaining routine contact with family members to provide companionship and emotional support and maintain an ongoing relationship between the department and the immediate family.
 - d.** Relaying the concerns and needs of the family to those individuals or organizations that may provide assistance, and encouraging others to visit and help as necessary.
- B.** In addition, the Superintendent, or his/her designee, shall ensure that the employee assistance program is implemented to assist surviving family members and emphasize their right to psychological services, and ensure that other officers are provided the opportunity to participate in Critical Incident Stress Debriefings.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all supervisory personnel to ensure that all personnel under their immediate supervision comply with this policy.