

GENERAL ORDER



Title
**Member Critical Injury or Line of Duty
Death Notifications**

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B

Replaces / Rescinds
General Order 101.4 (Police Family Services Team)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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I. BACKGROUND

One of the most devastating and traumatic events for any law enforcement officer is the critical injury or death of another member, particularly when it occurs in the line of duty. Other members who are working will respond to the incident to protect and maintain the scene, along with any other necessary law enforcement actions. Undoubtedly there is a great deal of personal and emotional trauma involved. However, this scene will be processed with care and professionalism, much like other critical incident scenes.

Likewise, a death notification or critical injury notification made to the involved member's family is, for them, a devastating and traumatic event. It involves a loved one and must be made with sensitivity and care despite extraordinary circumstances. This order establishes procedures to ensure the proper support and emotional care for an officer's family, to include spouses, children, parents, and siblings following a line of duty death or critical injury.

II. POLICY

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is to ensure critical injury and line of duty death notifications are made in person and in a timely and compassionate manner, to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of an officer who dies in the line of duty and to maintain a continuous relationship with the surviving family. This assistance will be provided whether the death was felonious or accidental, while the officer was performing a police-related function, either on or off duty. Further, the Chief of Police may institute certain parts of this order in cases of an officer's natural death. (CALEA 22.2.5 & 22.2.6)

III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive the following terms shall have the meaning designated:

1. Family Support Team – Representatives of the Department, trained for the purpose of assisting the families of deceased members and

coordinating all Department activities concerning funeral arrangements. Though not all members will be needed for every incident, the unit is comprised of a member from the Violent Crimes Branch (VCB), a Public Safety Chaplain, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Chairman or his/her designee, representatives of the Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program (MPEAP), past survivors, and the:

- a. Department Survivor Contact Coordinator – A trained member designated by the Chief of Police to serve as the Department’s official representative for the purpose of assisting the families of deceased members and to coordinate activities of Survivor Contact Officers.
 - b. Survivor Contact Officer – Trained member(s), including a member(s) of the MPD Honor Guard, selected to represent a Department element, establish contact and provide emotional support to survivors.
 - c. Hospital Liaison Officer – Trained member(s) of the Family Support Team who will coordinate with hospital and/or medical staff, the expected needs of the family prior to their arrival.
2. Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) – A non-profit organization that provides resources to assist in rebuilding the lives of surviving families of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.
 3. Honor Every Responsible Officers Eternal Sacrifice (HEROES) – A non-profit organization that provides assistance to the spouse and families of police and fire department personnel who have given their lives in the performance of duty.

IV. REGULATIONS

- A. All line of duty death and/or critical injury notifications to a member’s family shall be made by trained members, assigned to the MPD Family Support Team.
- B. The name of the deceased officer shall not be released by any Department member before the immediate family is notified. All members shall refrain from contacting surviving family members until such time as the Family Support Team has performed the notification duties. The family should not learn of a member’s death from the press or other sources.
- C. Coordination of events following the line of duty death of a police officer is an extremely important and complex responsibility. As an obligation to the officer’s

survivors and the law enforcement community, professionalism and compassion shall be exhibited at all times.

- D. Funeral arrangements for a member line of duty death will be decided by the family and their wishes shall take precedence over those of the Department.

V. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

A. Department Notifications

1. Notifications concerning a member's critical injury or line of duty death shall be immediately conveyed to a supervisory official. See, GO-PER-100.11 (Medical Services).
2. In the event of a line of duty death, external monitoring of police radio frequencies may be extensive. Whenever possible, communications regarding notifications shall be restricted to the telephone.
3. The Supervisor, Public Safety Communications Center, Office of Corporate Support, upon notification of an officer critical injury or line of duty death shall:
 - a. Notify the Synchronized Operations Command Center (SOCC), Office of Quality Assurance; and
 - b. Prior to the conclusion of his/her tour of duty, ensure that a personal notification to family members residing outside the Washington Metropolitan Area is made by the local police agency.
4. The Supervisor, Synchronized Operation Command Center (SOCC), Office of Quality Assurance, upon notification of officer critical injury or line of duty death, shall notify:
 - a. The Chief of Police;
 - b. The Executive Assistant Chief of Police;
 - c. Command Staff members;
 - d. The affected Commander/Director;
 - e. The Department Survivor Contact Coordinator;
 - f. The Force Investigation Team, when the incident involved the discharge of a member's firearm and/or a serious member use of force (See GO-RAR-901.08 [Use of Force Investigations]); and

- g. The MPEAP. See, GO-PER-201.28 (Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program).

B. Family Notifications

1. Only the Family Support Team, with the exception of the FOP Chairman and Hospital Liaison Officer, shall notify the immediate family of an officer who has suffered critical injuries or died in the line of duty.
2. Family notifications shall be made in person, by no less than two members of the Family Support Team:
 - a. Prior to knocking, while outside the residence, a team member shall telephone the family to announce their arrival and ask for admittance. Notifications shall NOT be made on the doorstep.
 - b. Inform family members slowly and clearly of known information. If the officer has died, relay the information. Never give the family a false sense of hope.
3. The family shall be transported to the hospital by a police vehicle. In the event a family member insists on driving, an officer shall accompany him/her utilizing an MPD vehicle.

NOTE: In consideration of the emotional trauma involved, it is highly recommended that family members do not drive themselves to or from the hospital.

4. Prior to departure or while en route to the hospital, the accompanying Survivor Contact Officer shall notify the Hospital Liaison Officer that the family is on the way and provide an estimated time of arrival.
5. Whenever possible, the parents of a deceased or critically injured member shall be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification.
6. When immediate survivors live beyond the Washington Metropolitan Area, the responsible Family Support Team member shall:
 - a. Initiate a teletype message, through the Teletype Unit, Information Technology, requesting personal notification to the family by the jurisdiction of residence;
 - b. Telephone the assisting agency to provide his/her name and contact number;

- c. Make and/or assist with out of town arrangements such as burial services, lodging reservations, and transportation; and
- d. At the request of the family and approval by the Chief of Police, have one Family Support Team member accompany the family to out of town burials.

C. Duties and Responsibilities

- 1. The Department Survivor Contact Coordinator shall:
 - a. Maintain a current listing of, and contact information for, all Family Support Team members;
 - (1) Update the listing and contact information as needed,
 - (2) Publish the updated listing for Department use,
 - (a) In a written communication as needed; (e.g., the Dispatch, administrative teletype message, memorandum), and
 - (b) At least annually, as an addendum to this directive;
 - (3) Provide Family Support Team member business contact information to interested stakeholders.
 - b. Upon notification of a member critical injury or line of duty death, coordinate Family Support Team activities.
 - c. Establish a family services file for each incident wherein the Family Support Team services were utilized. The file should contain;
 - (1) The name of the affected member,
 - (2) The date of the critical injury or end of watch,
 - (3) The name, contact number and element of the assigned survivor contact officer,
 - (4) The name, address, and contact information of the designated family contact,
 - (5) A chronology of activities to date, and

- (6) Projected activities that require Department participation.
 - d. When a new Survivor Contact Officer is selected, ensure the smooth transition of family introductions and Family Support Team activities.
 - e. Ensure that family members are apprised of upcoming Department activities.
 - f. Maintain a calendar citing the anniversary dates of member line of duty deaths.
 - g. In consultation with the Director, Institute of Police Science, arrange training for MPD Family Support Team members. The training shall include death notification procedures.
 - h. Provide status and/or follow-up information to the Chief of Police, Command Staff, or concerned family members.
 - i. Where appropriate, facilitate Family Support Team activities with other jurisdictions.
- 2. The Survivor Contact Officer position is not a decision-making position; he/she shall adhere to lawful directives from supervisory members as well as applicable MPD policies and directives, while acting as a facilitator between the member's family and the Department. In addition to other duties outlined in this directive, the Survivor Contact Officer shall:
 - a. Be immediately available for contact in the event of an officer line of duty death.
 - b. Be trained to properly deliver notifications.
 - c. Be continuously on call.
 - d. Work with the Department Public Information Office, Office of Corporate Communications, to facilitate response to media requests for interviews.
 - e. Where possible, request an officer familiar to the deceased member or surviving family to assist the Family Support Team. As needed, the assisting officer shall:
 - (1) Remain at the family home during the wake and funeral proceedings;

- (2) Assist with arrangements for food, childcare, transportation, or other needs as they arise.
- f. Provide information regarding services of the Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program (MPEAP) services (See GO-PER-201.28 [Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program]):
 - (1) To surviving family members; and/or
 - (2) To Department members emotionally affected by a critical injury or line of duty death.
- g. At the earliest opportunity, arrange for a detective/investigator to meet with the family and answer questions.
- h. Notify appropriate support groups such as COPS and HEROES.
- i. Notify the Benefits Office, Human Services Division, of a member line of duty death.
- j. Meet with the family within seventy-two (72) hours following the funeral to ensure the coordination of survivor benefits and discuss other available benefits to include;
 - (1) Arranging an appointment date and time with the Benefits Office, Office of Human Services,
 - (2) Determination of proper paperwork and identification needed; information required for benefits relative to surviving children, and
 - (3) Transportation for the family, if required.
- k. Notify the Commander, Special Operations Division, Special Services Command, when the family requests the Presentation of Colors by the Ceremonial Honor Guard.
- l. When the family requests that the officer be buried in uniform;
 - (1) Obtain a clean, fitted uniform and all accouterments from the Uniform and Equipment Section, Business Services Division, and

- (2) Deliver the items to the funeral home.
 - m. When requested, accompany family members to court proceedings.
 - n. Inform the family of investigative issues or new developments;
 - (1) In any criminal investigation prior to the release of information to the media, and
 - (2) Where appropriate, in any investigation related to a member's death.
 - o. Maintain a continuing relationship with the family of an officer who has been critically injured or died in the line of duty.
 - (1) Act as a long-term liaison with the surviving family to ensure that close contact is maintained with the Department; and
 - (2) Where possible, ensure survivors are invited to Department activities.
 - p. Provide information relative to services provided to the family and updates to:
 - (1) The member's Commander/Director; and
 - (2) The Department Family Support Coordinator.
3. The Hospital Liaison Officer shall:
- a. In conjunction with the Public Safety Chaplain, arrange with hospital personnel:
 - (1) An appropriate waiting area for the family, and
 - (2) A nearby waiting area for Department officials.
 - b. Coordinate with the medical staff to have the most recent information on the member's condition when the family arrives.
 - c. Provide updated information to the family in a timely manner before it is released to others.

- d. Act as a liaison between hospital staff and the family regarding medical forms to be completed upon arrival.
 - e. Ascertain visitation policies and arrange visitations for a critically injured member or a viewing in the case of a member line of duty death.
4. Supervisory Officials shall:
- a. As soon as practicable, relieve members who were on the scene or who arrived moments after the member was critically injured or killed.
 - b. Establish a detail outside the family residence during each tour of duty, until the burial has occurred. The officer shall be in uniform with a marked cruiser to assist the family if needed.
5. Commanding Officers/Directors shall:
- a. Appoint a member and one alternate, for each tour of duty, to serve as;
 - (1) A Survivor Contact Officer; and
 - (2) A Hospital Liaison Officer.
 - b. Advise the Department Survivor Contact Coordinator when a new Survivor Contact Officer or Hospital Liaison Officer is selected.
 - c. Upon notification of a member line of duty death;
 - (1) Accompany members of the Family Support Team to notify the family, or
 - (2) Respond to the hospital and meet the family upon arrival.
 - d. As soon as possible, on the day/evening of the incident, meet with the MPEAP clinical director or his/her designee to arrange for notification to Department members.
 - e. Prior to concluding his/her tour of duty, ensure that a detail has been established outside the family residence.

- f. Along with appropriate members of the Family Support Team, meet with the family, at their residence, to determine their wishes for the funeral or other service.
- g. Ensure the issuance of a Teletype to include;
 - (1) The name of the deceased member,
 - (2) The date and time of death,
 - (3) The circumstances surrounding the death,
 - (4) Funeral arrangements,
 - (5) The uniform to be worn by members in attendance at the funeral,
 - (6) If determined, the name/address of the contact person/place, and
 - (7) Any request for expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers.
- h. Arrange for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family. Personal belongings shall be;
 - (1) Appropriately boxed, and
 - (2) NEVER placed inside of a plastic trash bag.
- i. Ensure that all member emergency contact information remains current. Discuss the importance of accurate records with members at roll calls, conduct random inspections, and update as necessary:
 - (1) The PD Form 73 (Personnel Action), (See GO-PER-201.19 [Handling Employee Personnel Records; Collection and Release of Personnel Data; Employee Telephone/Residency Requirements]);

NOTE: Contact information must be current (e.g. marriage, divorce info), so proper parties are notified.
 - (2) The PD 700 (Emergency Notification Card); and

- (3) The Time, Attendance, and Court Information System (TACIS).
 - j. Ensure the confidentiality and security of emergency contact information.
6. Members of the Benefits Office, Office of Human Services, shall:
 - a. Ascertain beneficiary information;
 - b. Identify the designated beneficiary(ies);
 - c. Work with the Survivor Contact Officer to arrange an appointment for family member(s) to discuss available benefits; and
 - d. ONLY discuss member line of duty death benefits with a designated beneficiary. See, GO-PER-100.31 (Public Safety Officer's Benefit Act).
7. The Commander, Special Operations Division, Special Services Command, shall:
 - a. Ensure the coordination of requests for services by the Ceremonial Honor Guard as outlined in GO-OMA-101.05 (Ceremonial Honor Guard);
 - b. Where necessary, coordinate the route to be utilized for the funeral procession with other jurisdictions; and
 - c. In consultation with the Assistant Chief, Special Services Command, approve the route utilized for the funeral procession, considering time of day, traffic conditions and the number of participating vehicles, among other factors.
8. The Supervisor, Clothing and Equipment Section, Business Services Division, shall ensure the coordination and delivery of a uniform and accoutrements for the burial of a member who died in the line of duty.
9. The Director, MPEAP, or his/her designee will act as a liaison with the Department and coordinate survivor services. See, GO-PER-201.28 (Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program).

10. The Chief of Police or his/her designee shall:
 - a. Respond to the hospital to meet the family of a member who has been critically injured or killed in the line of duty;
 - b. Ensure that the anniversaries of all MPD line of duty deaths are observed at the annual memorial ceremony during Law Enforcement Memorial Week.

VI. CROSS REFERENCES

- A. GO-OMA-101.05 (Ceremonial Honor Guard)
- B. GO-OMA-100.11 (Medical Services)
- C. GO-PER-100.31 (Public Safety Officer's Benefits Act)
- D. GO-PER-201.28 (Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program)
- E. GO-PER-204.03 (Heroes, Inc.)
- F. GO-RAR-901.08 (Use of Force Investigations)

// SIGNED //
Charles H. Ramsey
Chief of Police

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