

GENERAL ORDER



Title		
Next of Kin Notifications		
Topic	Series	Number
OPS	401	08
Effective Date		
January 24, 2020		
Replaces:		
GO-OPS-401.08 (Notification of Next of Kin in Cases of Serious Injuries or Fatalities), Effective Date October 17, 1994)		

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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I. PURPOSE

MPD members shall conduct next of kin notifications for individuals involved in vehicle crashes, industrial accidents, and criminal acts, non-criminal incidents, or accidents, occurring on public or private space in the District of Columbia, where a person has received serious or fatal injuries, including apparent suicides and natural deaths. The purpose of this order is to establish procedures for next of kin notifications.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Notifying Elements

1. The Homicide Branch shall make next of kin notifications in cases involving death or any other cases in which the Homicide Branch has investigative responsibility.
2. The District Detective Unit (DDU), with investigative responsibility of cases involving serious injuries not handled by the Homicide Branch, shall make next of kin notifications when the victim is unable to notify the next of kin on their own. DDU members shall notify the Criminal Investigations Division watch commander prior to making the notification.
3. The Major Crash Investigations Unit shall make next of kin notifications in cases involving serious bodily injury or death resulting from traffic-related incidents falling under their investigative authority.
4. The Internal Affairs Bureau shall make next of kin notifications in any cases in which the Internal Affairs Bureau has investigative responsibility.
5. The Youth and Family Services Division shall make next of kin notifications when MPD receives messages from outside police agencies requesting notification to a relative residing in the District of Columbia.

B. Notification Requirements

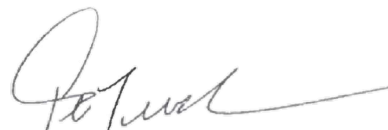
1. The notifying member shall identify the next of kin pursuant to the priority list provided in this order. When determining next of kin, the member shall not move on to the next individual in order of priority until the member has made every effort to locate the prior individual without success. Once the appropriate individual is identified as the person standing highest in the order of priority, no one else shall be considered the next of kin..
2. Once the notifying member establishes the next of kin, notifications shall occur as soon as possible. Notifications shall take place in person, whenever possible.
3. Prior to notification, the notifying member shall make a reasonable attempt to ascertain the next of kin’s physical and mental condition. If the next of kin is elderly, ill, or unwell, members shall make every effort to have a family member, friend, neighbor, member of the clergy, or physician present at the time of notification, even if the individual appears to be in good physical and mental health.
4. If notification will occur at a place of employment, notifying members shall contact the person in charge of the business to ascertain the physical and mental condition of the next of kin and request a company nurse or other appropriate person to be present at the time of notification.
5. When conducting next of kin notifications in another jurisdiction, notifying members shall request the presence of the local jurisdiction to accompany them during the notification.
6. Members shall ensure that the next of kin’s identity is confirmed prior to providing any information. Any future communication related to the case shall be addressed to the next of kin unless otherwise requested by the next of kin.
7. Members shall display empathy and compassion when notifying the next of kin. Whenever possible, members shall:

Next of Kin Notification Techniques	
a.	Conduct the notification in a gradual manner, avoiding blunt or abrupt disclosure of the news by careful selection of each word or phrase and the manner in which the notification occurs.
b.	Carefully evaluate the mental and emotional state of the next of kin, and be prepared to give a definitive notification of the circumstances involved.
c.	Anticipate that the next of kin may question the notification with a variety of emotions that may range from sorrow to anger. The grief cycle begins once the notification is made and members are encouraged to be as supportive as possible.
d.	Bring material that provides resources for grief counseling and mental health support.

III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meanings designated.

	Term	Definition
1.	Adult	Person who is 18 years of age or older.
2.	Grief cycle	Five nonlinear stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) that are a part of the framework that makes up an individual's learning to live with a loss. The stages are considered tools to help identify what individuals may be feeling.
3.	Next of kin	<p>Person's closest living relative or relatives. Members shall notify the individual standing highest in the following order of priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Spouse or domestic partner; b. Adult child; c. Parent; d. Adult sibling; e. Adult grandchild; f. Adult nephew or niece; g. Grandparent; h. Adult uncle or aunt; i. Adult child of uncle or aunt; j. Great-grandparent; k. Sibling of a grandparent; l. Relative of the spouse or domestic partner of the deceased, in accordance with the preceding order of priority; or m. Adult friend or volunteer. <p><u>NOTE:</u> The oldest member of a class has a prior claim over other members of the same class.</p>



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PN:KDO:MOC:SMM