

*Maryland-National Capital Park Police
Prince George's County Division*

DIVISION DIRECTIVE

TITLE SERIOUS INJURIES, ILLNESS, OR DEATH OF OFFICER/FAMILY MEMBER		PROCEDURE NUMBER PG702.0	
SECTION Administrative Procedures	DISTRIBUTION A	EFFECTIVE DATE 02/01/05	REVIEW DATE 02/01/07
REPLACES PG702.0 "Serious Injuries, Illness, or Death Of Officer/ Family Member", issued 07/01/02			
RELATED DIRECTIVES PG406.0	REFERENCES CALEA 22, 55	AUTHORITY Commander Larry M. Brownlee, Sr.- Division Chief	

I. PURPOSE

This directive's purpose is to provide guidelines and establish procedures for notifications in the event of a serious injury, illness, or death of a Division Officer or member(s) of his/her immediate family.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Chief, Park Police Division, is responsible for making all notifications required by this directive but may delegate this responsibility when the situation dictates.
- B. In cases where the injuries are not of a severe nature, requires hospitalization, or cause an inordinate delay in the officer's arriving at his/her residence, notification is not required.

III. DIVISION OFFICERS

- A. Each case has its own different set of circumstances and must be handled tactfully and compassionately because of the emotional impact upon the officer or his/her family.
- B. Every effort shall be made to make all notifications through a personal visit unless factors such as time or distance preclude such considerations.
- C. Notifications will be made within a reasonable period of time without regard to time of day.

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D. Compassion

1. The officer/official making the notification must make every effort to be sensitive to the individual's emotions when conveying such news. Whenever possible, the notifying official will check first with family, neighbors or friends to determine beforehand the individual's physical and mental condition before confronting them with such unexpected news.
2. Every effort shall be made to have a clergyman, physician, or close friend present when the notification is made.
3. If the notification will be made at the person's place of employment, all attempts should be made to have medical/emergency personnel on hand. If such personnel are not readily available, the notification should be made regardless.
4. The Chief, Park Police Division, shall insure that the Director of Parks and Recreation is notified immediately of all serious injuries or deaths involving a Park Police Officer.

IV. IMMEDIATE FAMILY

- A. Whenever a member of an officer's immediate family is seriously injured, hospitalized, or dies while the officer is on duty and the message is received by the command staff or the communications section, a telephone number for contacts will be obtained to receive details concerning hospital or funeral arrangements.
- B. The Operations Duty Officer will be notified of the situation immediately.
- C. The senior officer/OIC on duty shall provide appropriate assistance to the officer and his family.
- D. In the event of a violent or criminal incident resulting in the family member's condition, the senior officer present shall give consideration to temporarily relieving the officer of his/her service handgun, escorting the officer to a medical facility for observation (if applicable), escorting the officer to the facility where his/her family member is located, or to a place where he/she can be observed by another individual (family member or close friend) in order to avoid further upset.
- E. In all such cases **THE OFFICER SHOULD NOT BE LEFT ALONE** to cope with the situation.

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V. LINE OF DUTY DEATHS

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 member's family, specific tasks may be assigned to selected members of the Department. Their titles are: Notification Officer, Hospital Liaison Officer, Family Liaison Officer, Department Liaison Officer and Benefits Coordinator. A member may be called upon to perform more than one of these roles.

A. Notification

1. Notifications will be made at the direction of the Division Chief or his/her designee.
2. The name of the deceased member will not be released before the immediate family is notified.
3. 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.
4. Notification will be made in person and never alone. The Division Chief or his/her designee, police chaplain, close friend, or another police survivor could appropriately accompany the **Notification Officer**. However, if the aforementioned persons are not readily accessible, notification should not be delayed until these people can gather. The family should learn of the death from the Department first and not from the press or other sources.
5. Never make a death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted to the house. Inform family members slowly and clearly of the information that you have. 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 member's name during the notification. If the member has died, relay that information. Never give the family false sense of hope. Use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away."
6. 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 should accompany them in the family car.
7. If young children are at home, the **Notification Officer** must arrange for babysitting needs. This may involve co-worker's spouses, transportation of children to a relative's home, or similar arrangements.
8. 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 en-route.

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9. The deceased member's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification whenever possible.
10. If immediate survivors live beyond the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the **Notification Officer** will ensure that the Communications Section sends a teletype message to the appropriate jurisdiction, requesting a personal notification. The **Notification Officer** may choose to 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 Department.
11. The Division Chief or a Command Staff Officer should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with the family as quickly as possible.
12. Whenever possible, communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone. If the media has obtained the member's name, they will be advised to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin.

B. Assistance for Affected Members

1. Members who were on the scene or who arrived moments after a member was critically injured or killed should be relieved as quickly as possible.
2. Police witnesses and other members who may have been emotionally affected by the serious injury or death of another member will attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing held by a trained mental health professional.

C. Assisting the Family at the Hospital

1. The first official, other than the Division Chief or his/her representative, to arrive at the hospital becomes the **Hospital Liaison**. The **Hospital Liaison** is responsible for coordinating activities of hospital personnel, the member's family, and police officers. The press and media will be referred to the Public Information Officer. These responsibilities include:
 - a. Arranging with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, the Division Chief, the **Notification Officer**, and others requested by the immediate survivors;
 - b. Arranging a separate area for fellow police officers to assemble;
 - c. Ensuring that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding a member's condition to the family on a timely basis and before such information is released to others;
 - d. Notifying the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased member are directed to the Office of Risk Management for M-NCPPC. The family should not receive any of these bills at their residence. This may require the **Hospital Liaison** to re-contact the hospital during normal business hours to ensure that proper billing takes place;

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- e. Ensuring that the family is updated regarding the incident and the member's condition upon their arrival at the hospital; and
 - f. Arranging transportation for the family back to their residence.
2. If it is possible for the family to visit the injured member 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 is necessary.
 3. The **Notification Officer(s)** should remain at the hospital while the family is present.
 4. Do not be overly protective of the family. This includes sharing specific information as to how the member met his/her demise, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased member.
- D. Support of the Family During the Wake and Funeral
1. The Division Chief or his/her designee, will meet with the member's family to determine their wishes regarding Departmental participation in the preparation of the funeral services. All possible assistance will be rendered.
 2. With the approval of the family, the Division Chief will assign a **Family Liaison Officer**. The Division Chief will also designate a **Department Liaison Officer** and a **Benefits Coordinator**.
- E. **Family Liaison Officer**
1. The selection of a **Family Liaison Officer** is a critical assignment. An attempt should be made to assign someone who enjoyed a close relationship with the member and his/her family. When possible, male/female "teams" should be utilized as **Family Liaison Officer(s)**, thus preventing bonding between the survivor(s) and member during a vulnerable time in the survivor's life.
 2. This is not a decision-making position, but a "facilitator" between the family and the Department.
 3. Responsibilities of the **Family Liaison Officer** include:
 - a. Ensuring that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department;
 - b. 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, etc.);

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- c. Apprising the family of information concerning the death and the continuing investigation;
- d. 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.;
- e. Being constantly available to the family;
- f. 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.; and
- g. Notifying Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), 1-(573)-346-4911. Members are available to provide emotional support to surviving families.

F. Department Liaison Officer

- 1. Responsibilities of the **Department Liaison Officer** include:
 - a. Working closely with the **Family Liaison Officer** to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled;
 - b. 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;
 - c. Meeting with the following persons to coordinate funeral activities and established an itinerary:
 - 1) Division Chief and Assistant Chiefs;
 - 2) Funeral Director;
 - 3) Family priest or minister;
 - 4) Cemetery Director; and
 - 5) Park Police Honor Guard.
 - d. Directing the funeral activities of the Division and visiting police departments according to the wishes of the family;
 - e. Issuing a teletype message to include the following:
 - 1) Name of deceased;
 - 2) Date and time of death;
 - 3) Circumstances surrounding the death;
 - 4) Funeral arrangements (state if service will be private or a police funeral);
 - 5) Uniform to be worn;
 - 6) Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers; and

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- 7) Contact person and phone number for visiting departments to call to indicate their desire to attend or to obtain further information.
- f. Obtaining an American Flag. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Division Chief, notify the Division Chief's Office;
- g. 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;
- h. Assigning members for usher duty at the church;
- i. Arranging for the delivery of the member's personal belongings to the family;
- j. Briefing the Division Chief and Command Staff concerning all funeral arrangements;
- k. Ensuring that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged for them during the funeral and procession;
- l. Coordinating traffic management, with other jurisdiction during the viewing, funeral and procession, and arranging for a tow truck to be available along the procession route;
- m. Assigning a member to remain at the funeral home during the viewing and funeral;
- n. Maintaining a roster of all Departments sending personnel to the funeral, including:
 - 1) Name and address of responding agencies;
 - 2) Name of the Chief of Police;
 - 3) Number of officers attending;
 - 4) Number of officers attending the reception after the funeral; and
 - 5) Number of vehicles.
- o. Assisting in making the necessary accommodations for food, lodging, etc.; and
- p. Acknowledging visiting and assisting departments.

G. Benefits Coordinator

1. The **Benefits Coordinator** will gather information on benefits/funeral payments available to the 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.

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2. The **Benefits Coordinator** is responsible for:
 - a. Filing Worker's Compensation claims and related paperwork, although, this may have been completed by the member's supervisor previously;
 - b. Contacting the appropriate M-NCPPC Benefits Offices without delay to ensure that the beneficiary receives death and retirement benefits, the members remaining paychecks and payment for remaining annual and compensatory time;
 - c. Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments, to include the Public Safety Officers Benefits Act, available to the family;
 - d. Setting up any special trust funds or educational funds;
 - e. Notifying police organizations such as HEROES, Inc., the Fraternal Order of Police, the Maryland State Fraternal Order of Police, etc., of the death and ensuring that any and all entitlements are paid to the beneficiary. These agencies may also offer legal and financial counseling to the family at no cost;
 - f. Preparing a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that are due to the family, listing named beneficiaries and contacts at various benefits offices, and when they can expect to receive payment;
 - g. Meeting with the surviving family a few days after the funeral to discuss the benefits they will receive. A copy of the prepared printout and any other related paperwork should be given to the family at this time.
 - 1) 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; and
 - 2) Attention should be given to the revocation of health care benefits. Many providers allow a 30-day grace period before canceling or imposing monthly payments upon the survivors.

H. Continued Support for the Family

1. Members of the Department must remain sensitive to the needs of the survivors long after the member'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.
2. Survivors should continue to feel a part of the "police family." They should be invited to Division activities to ensure continued contact.
3. Members of the Division 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 continue.

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4. The Division Chief should observe the member'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.
5. 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.
6. The **Family Liaison Officer** acts as a long-term liaison with the surviving family to ensure that close contact is maintained between the Division and the survivors and that their needs are met for as long as they feel the need for support.
7. If no court proceedings surround the circumstances of the member's death, the **Family Liaison Officer** will relay all details of the incident to the family at the earliest opportunity.
8. If criminal violations surround the death, the **Family Liaison Officer** will:
 - a. Inform the family of all new developments prior to press release;
 - b. Keep the family apprised of legal proceedings;
 - c. Introduce the family to the victims' assistance specialists of the court;
 - d. Encourage the family to attend the trial, and accompany them whenever possible; and
 - e. Arrange for Investigators to meet with the family at the earliest opportunity following the trial to answer all their questions.

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