
	<b>GAITHERSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>		
	Line-of-Duty Death or Serious Injury To GPD Member/ Support Services		
	<b>GENERAL ORDER</b>	<b>202.3</b>	
<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>04/21/2015</b>		
<b>Authorized by:</b>	<b>Mark P. Sroka</b> CHIEF OF POLICE	SIGNATURE	DATE

**I. DEPARTMENT POLICY**

It is the policy of this Department to promptly notify and provide assistance to the immediate family of any Gaithersburg Police Officer who dies, or who is seriously injured, in the line of duty, regardless of whether the death or serious injury is the result of felonious or accidental circumstances.

Consistent with that assistance, the Department, at an appropriate time for the surviving family, will make the family aware of survivor benefits, as well as, provide both tangible and intangible emotional support during this traumatic period. The Department further realizes and understands that the actual funeral arrangements will properly reflect the wishes of the deceased member's family.

**II. CREDITS**

- A. Much of the content of this policy was printed with permission from Concerns of Police Survivors, Incorporated, based on a publication titled, *Support Services to Surviving Families of Line of Duty Death.*

**III. PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFYING COMMAND STAFF**

**A. Immediate Notification Required**

1. The Shift Supervisor shall ensure immediate notification of the Command Staff through the most expedient means.
2. When making the initial notification to Command Staff via radio, the Shift Supervisor must be cognizant that radio transmissions may be monitored by members of the media.

**IV. PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFICATIONS OF A MEMBER'S FAMILY**

**A. Prior to Making the Notification**

1. The *Supervisor's Guide to Notification* will be consulted to determine the order a particular notification will be made.

2. The member's name will not be released to the media (on or off the record) until the immediate survivors are notified.
3. The member's name will only be released by the Department PIO or a member of the Command Staff.
4. If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate family member, officers should consider having medical staff on standby during the notification.
5. Notification will always be made in person by the Chief of Police, and/or a Bureau Commander, whenever possible.

**B. Upon Arrival at the Survivor's Residence**

1. Unless the situation dictates otherwise, the notification should be made inside the home, and not out in public.
2. The survivor(s) will be informed slowly and clearly of the information pertaining to the incident.
  - When conveying the information, the officer's name should be used during the notification.
  - If specifics of the incident are known, the survivor(s) must be given as much information as possible.
  - If the officer has already died, that information will be relayed.
  - The survivor(s) will not be given a false sense of hope.
  - Words such as "died" or "dead" should be used, rather than "gone away" or "passed away"
3. If the officer responsible for the death notification has been seriously affected, he or she should understand that showing emotions is perfectly acceptable and reactions by the survivor(s) may include hysteria, anger, fainting, physical violence, shock, etc.
4. If the survivor(s) wants to go to the hospital, they should be transported via police vehicle. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves.
  - ***Should there be serious resistance and the family insists on driving, an officer should accompany them in their vehicle.***

- ***If small children are home during the notification, the notifying officer(s) must be cognizant of the fact that babysitting needs may have to be arranged. If necessary, arrangements should be made for an officer to remain at the residence to assist.***
- 5. Once the family is enroute to the hospital, the Public Safety Communications Center should be notified so that information can be relayed to officers at the hospital.
- 6. The deceased or severely injured officer's parents will be afforded the courtesy of personal notification if they live in the area.
- 7. If immediate survivor(s) are out of town, or do not reside in the area, the Department will request a personal death notification from the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the survivor(s) is located.

**C. Assisting the Survivor(s)/Family at the Hospital**

1. This is a priority of the Department and assisting members will communicate with hospital staff in order to arrange for appropriate waiting facilities for the member's family.
2. The officer in charge at the hospital should ensure that medical personnel relay pertinent information to the family on the member's condition on a timely basis.
3. ***CONCERNS OF POLICE SURVIVORS recommends that officers at the hospital should not be overly protective of the family.***
4. As soon as the family arrives at the hospital, the Chief of Police, or his or her designee, will ensure that the family is updated on the incident as soon as possible.
5. The Chief of Police or his or her designee will make every effort to be present the entire time the family is at the hospital, unless called away, at which time, a representative will be appointed, to arrange whatever assistance the family may need at that time.
6. The officer(s) who made the initial notification should be among those at the hospital.
7. A survivor should not be sedated unless medication is specifically requested by the survivor.

8. Idle promises should not be made to the family at this time (i.e., "We'll promote him/her posthumously", "We'll retire his/her badge").
9. Arrangements should be made for transportation of the family back to their residence.
10. Arrangements should be made for all medical bills relating to the services rendered to the member to be sent directly to the City's Human Resources Office, not to the deceased member's family's address.

**D. Support for the Family During the Wake and Funeral**

1. The Chief of Police, with the approval of the family, will appoint a "liaison officer" to assist the family throughout the wake and funeral:
  - The liaison officer should know the deceased member and be aware of the family relationships,
  - The officer should not be so emotionally involved with the loss that they would become ineffective, and,
  - The liaison officer must know that this is not a decision making position, but that this is a "facilitator" role between the family and the Department.
2. The liaison officer will:
  - Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department;
  - Meet with the family and tell them what their responsibilities will be during this time;
  - Meet with the family concerning funeral arrangements (if any);
  - The family should be made aware of what the Department can offer in the way of assistance if the family decides to have a "law enforcement funeral;"
  - See that the family is briefed on the law enforcement funeral procedures (i.e., "21-gun-salute", presenting of the

flag, playing of "taps" last call, etc.);

- If the family desires a burial in uniform, obtain or designate an officer to obtain a uniform and all accouterments and deliver them to the funeral home;
- Determine if the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief of Police;
- Know all information concerning the death and continuing investigation to answer family questions;
- Provide as much assistance as possible and oversee arrangements for travel and lodging for out of town family members;
- Be constantly available by cell phone throughout this traumatic time;
- Ascertain what police fraternal/labor organization involvement will be, if any, and what financial assistance they are willing to provide for out of town family travel, feeding the funeral attendees following the burial, etc.;
- See that the surviving parent(s) are afforded recognition and will have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and funeral procession;
- Assist family members in securing adequate babysitting help for their needs, if necessary;
- Accommodate all possible family requests for assistance by communicating those desires to the Chief of Police;
- Suggest the family avail themselves of a telephone answering machine to screen calls to the residence;
- Coordinate efforts with the family minister, F.O.P., Funeral Director, and Cemetery Director regarding funeral arrangements;
- Compile information concerning the funeral arrangements and any other pertinent information needed to complete the teletype notification as follows:
  - Name of the deceased;

- Date/Time of death;
  - Funeral arrangements;
  - Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers;
  - Uniform to be worn; and
  - Order flags at "half-staff" and authorize mourning ribbons for a thirty day period (*only for line of duty deaths*).
- Complete an itinerary for the day of the funeral services;
  - Brief the Chief of Police and Command Staff concerning all funeral arrangements;
  - Determine the location of the officer's personal property (i.e., Evidence Room), being particularly attentive to wedding rings and religious medals;
  - Obtain an American flag, which can usually be obtained from the funeral home;
  - Ensure that mourning bunting is erected at the Police facility;
  - Maintain a roster of all departments sending personnel to the funeral and assist with accommodations;
  - Arrange for on-duty officers desiring to attend the funeral services;
  - Arrange for an ambulance to be present at the cemetery and coordinate the "crossed ladders";
  - Assist the family with transportation after the funeral; and
  - Acknowledge visiting or assisting departments with letters of appreciation.
3. The family will be made aware of, and have access to, other public safety survivors or other support groups, such as:
- Concerns of Police Survivors; and

- Compassionate Friends.

**E. Relations With the Media and Release of Information**

1. While the Department recognizes the importance of providing the public, via the media, with accurate and complete information, the Department will withhold certain information concerning a member's serious injuries or death in the following circumstance:
  - If a survivor(s) has not been notified, and/or
  - If the premature release of certain information would/could hamper the investigation into the incident.
2. If an investigation is being conducted by an outside agency (such as MCP Homicide/Sex, etc.), the release of information by this Department will be coordinated with their investigators.

**F. Benefits Information Provided to Surviving Family**

1. The liaison officer will meet with the City's Human Resources Director as soon as possible to gather information on behalf of the family, or will arrange a meeting between the family and the Human Resources Director for this purpose.

**G. Long-Term Contact With Family Maintained**

1. The Department, through its liaison officer, or as directed by the Chief of Police, will maintain contact with the surviving family by, among other things:
  - Frequently communicating with survivors to reiterate the Department's interest and support for the family;
  - Assisting the surviving family with the completion of applicable forms and papers;
  - Providing words of encouragement to the family;
  - Accompanying survivors to court appearances, as necessary, and
  - Assisting the family with problems of which the Department is best-equipped to handle.

## V. PERSONNEL SUPPORT SERVICES

### A. Available to All GPD Members

1. In addition to the types of leave and benefits provided by the City, the Department will provide support services to its employees that will include, and may not be limited to:
  - Ensuring that information is provided pertaining to employee benefits;
  - Providing continuing training, education, and career enhancement and development opportunities;
  - Keeping employees informed via newsletters, publications, and other methods about newly-enacted or revised laws, City policies, Department policies, and other issues that impact them;
  - Providing counseling, as necessary and appropriate, regarding retirement options, savings plan options, assistance with personal problems, etc.;
  - Assisting and supporting the surviving family of a member seriously injured or killed in the line of duty;
  - Involving itself to the extent necessary and appropriate to assist one of its members with a sudden, unforeseen event in which the employee and his/her family would benefit; and
  - Requesting the establishment of a *Leave Bank*.

### B. Police Psychologist

1. The City has an agreement with a licensed Psychologist knowledgeable in the nature of law enforcement to whom employees can avail themselves.
2. An employee desirous of speaking with the Police Psychologist should contact their supervisor or the Human Resource Office.

### C. Employee Assistance Program

1. The Employee Assistance Program is available to all City employees (see **General Order 202.4**).



2. An employee interested in this confidential program may call the City's Human Resources Office for a phone number or brochure.

**D. Peer Support Team Notification**

1. A member of the Montgomery County's *Peer Support Team*, is available 24-hours.
2. Unless waived by the officer involved, a Peer Counselor will be notified by the on duty supervisor whenever a GPD member is involved in any of the incidents or events listed below:
  - *Anytime a member witnesses the death of or serious injury to any person;*
  - *Incidents involving the death of or serious physical/emotional trauma to a child; and*
  - *Those situations which by their nature would have a severe adverse effect on the member.*