

# NEW HAVEN DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICE

## GENERAL ORDERS



GENERAL ORDER **334**

EFFECTIVE DATE: JANUARY 15, 2012

### ON-DUTY DEATH AND LIFE THREATENING INJURIES NOTIFICATION

#### 334.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish procedures that will ensure the proper notification and support to the officer's family in the event of an on-duty death or life-threatening injury.

#### 334.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the New Haven Department of Police Services to provide assistance via liaisons to the immediate survivors of any member who dies or is seriously injured in the line-of-duty. *The Chief of Police may institute certain parts of this order for cases of an officer's natural death.* The Department will provide survivor benefits and offer emotional support via the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Funeral arrangements of the deceased officer are to be decided by the family.

In the event of an on-duty officer death, the following tasks may be assigned to members of the Department:

- A. NOTIFICATION OFFICER
- B. HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER
- C. FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER
- D. DEPARTMENT LIAISON OFFICER
- E. BENEFITS COORDINATOR

This policy is based upon guidelines suggested in the handbook titled, "Support Services to Surviving Families of Line of Duty Death," by Suzanne F. Sawyer, the Executive Director of Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. (C.O.P.S.).

### **334.3 PROCEDURES**

#### **A. NOTIFICATION OFFICER**

1. The Division Commander, or designee, will examine the officer's Emergency Notification Record and identify those individuals the officer requested be notified. The Emergency Notification Record will be kept at a location that has 24 hour access.
2. In the event of an officer's death, it is the responsibility of the officer's Division Commander, or designee, to properly notify the next of kin. (The name of the deceased officer must never be released by the Department before the immediate family is notified.)
3. Prior to notifying an immediate survivor with a medical condition, medical personnel shall be present.
4. Notification must always be made in person by a Notification Officer and another person including but not limited to one of the following:
  - The Chief of Police or a representative
  - Police Chaplain
  - Close friend
  - Another police officer

However, notification should not be delayed if the aforementioned persons are not readily accessible.

The following should be taken into consideration when notifying the next of kin:

- Never make the death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted into 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 officer's name during the notification.
- If the officer has died, relay that information. Never give the family a false sense of hope. Use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away."

- 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 young children are at home, the Notification Officer must make certain that the children are safe. This may involve co-workers' spouses, transportation of children to a relative's home, or a similar arrangement.
- Prior to departing to 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.
- The deceased or severely injured officer's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification if possible.
- If immediate survivors live extremely far beyond the City of New Haven area, the Notification Officer will ensure that a teletype message is sent 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 New Haven Police Department.
- The Chief or a high ranking representative should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with the family as quickly as possible.
- The Notification Officer(s) should remain at the hospital while the family is present.
- In the event of an on-duty death, the external monitoring of police frequencies may be extensive. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. If the media has somehow obtained the officer's name, they should be advised to withhold the information pending notification of next of kin.

## **B. HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER**

The first official, other than the Chief or his representative, to arrive at the hospital becomes the Hospital Liaison. The Hospital Liaison Officer may be changed at a later date.

Responsibilities of the Hospital Liaison Officer include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the officer's family, police officers, the press, and others.
- Arrange with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, the Chief of Police, the Notification Officer, and only those others requested by the immediate family.
- Arrange a separate area for other police officers and friends to assemble.
- Establish a press staging area.
- Ensure that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding an officer's condition to the family on a timely basis, before such information is released to others.
- Ensure that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital.
- If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer 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.
- Arrange transportation for the family back to their residence
- Notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased officer be directed to the City of New Haven Workers Compensation Coordinator's Office. The family should not receive any of these bills at their residence. This may require the Hospital Liaison to contact the hospital during normal business hours to ensure that proper billing takes place.

#### C. FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER

1. The Chief of Police, or designee, will meet with the officer's family to determine their wishes regarding departmental participation in the funeral services. All possible assistance will be rendered.

2. With the approval of family, the Chief or designee will assign a Family Liaison Officer. The Chief or designee will also designate a Department Liaison Officer and a Benefits Coordinator.
3. The selection of the Family Liaison Officer is a critical assignment. An attempt should be made to assign someone who enjoyed a close relationship with the officer and his/her family.
4. This is not a decision making position. This is a role of "facilitator" between the family and the Police Department.

Family Liaison Officer responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Police Department.
- Assist the family with funeral arrangements and make them aware of what the Police Department can offer if they decide to have a police funeral. If they choose the latter, brief the family on funeral procedure (i.e., 21 gun salute, presenting the flag, playing of taps).
- Apprise the family of information concerning the death and the continuing investigation.
- Provide 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 and transportation needs, etc.
- Be constantly available to the family.
- Determine 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.

**D. DEPARTMENT LIAISON OFFICER:**

Department Liaison Officer responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- This position is usually assigned to a Division Commander because of the need to effectively coordinate resources throughout the Department.
- Work closely with Family Liaison Officer to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled.

- Handle the news media throughout the ordeal. If the family decides to accept an interview, an officer should attend to “screen” questions presented to the family so as not to jeopardize subsequent legal proceedings.
- Meet with the following persons to coordinate funeral activities and establish an itinerary:
  - a. Chief of Police and Division Commanders.
  - b. Funeral Director
  - c. Spiritual Leader
  - d. Cemetery Director
  - e. Honor Guard
- Direct the funeral activities of the Police Department and visiting police agencies according to the wishes of the family.
- Issue a teletype message to include the following:
  - a. Name of the deceased
  - b. Date and time of death
  - c. Circumstances surrounding the death
  - d. Funeral arrangements (state if service will be private or a police funeral)
  - e. Uniform to be worn
  - f. Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers
  - g. Contact person and phone number for visiting agencies to indicate their desire to attend and to obtain additional information
- Obtain an American Flag. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief, notify the Chief’s Office.
- If the family desires a burial in uniform, select an officer to obtain a uniform and all accoutrements (except weapons) and deliver them to the funeral home.

- Assign members for usher duty as needed.
- Arrange for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family.
- Brief the Chief and staff concerning all funeral arrangements.
- Ensure that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged for them during the funeral and procession.
- Arrange for a stand-by doctor for the family, if necessary.
- Coordinate traffic management, with other jurisdictions if necessary, during the viewing, funeral, and procession. Arrange for a tow truck to be available along the procession route.
- Assign an officer to remain at the family home during the viewing and funeral.
- Maintain a roster of all Departments sending personnel to the funeral, including:
  - a. Name and address of responding agency
  - b. Name of Chief of Police
  - c. Number of officers responding
  - d. Number of officers attending the reception after the funeral
  - e. Number of vehicles.
- Assist in making the necessary accommodations (food, lodging, etc.).
- Acknowledge visiting and assisting departments.
- Arrange for routine residence checks by the Patrol Division of the survivor's home for 6-8 weeks following the funeral. This service is necessary since large amounts of money are passing through the residence and the survivors will be spending much time away from the home dealing with legal matters.

#### **E. BENEFITS COORDINATOR**

Benefits Coordinator responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- The Benefits Coordinator will gather information on ALL benefits/funeral payments available to the family.
- The Benefits Coordinator has the Police 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.
- File Worker's Compensation claims and related paperwork
- Contact the appropriate city offices without delay to ensure that the beneficiary receives death and retirement benefits, the Officer's remaining paychecks and payment remaining annual and compensatory time.
- Assist in setting up any special trust funds or educational funds as requested by the family.
- Notify police organizations such as HEROES, Inc., the Fraternal Order of Police, etc., of the death to ensure that any and all entitlements are paid to the beneficiary(s).  
*(These agencies may also offer legal and financial counseling to the family at no cost.)*
- Prepare a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that are due to the family. This printout should list named beneficiaries, contacts at various benefits offices, and when they expect to receive payment.
- Meet 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.

*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.*

*Attention should be given to the revocation of health benefits. The majority of health benefit providers allow a 30 day grace period before canceling or imposing monthly payments upon survivors.*

- Meet again with the family in about six months to make sure that they are receiving their benefits.



**F. ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED OFFICERS**

1. Officers who were on the scene or who arrived moments after an officer was critically injured or killed may have to be relieved of duty as soon as possible.
2. Police witnesses and other officers who may have been emotionally affected by the serious injury or death of another officer will attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing held by a trained mental health professional.

**G. CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY**

- Members of the Police Department must remain sensitive to the needs of the survivors long after the officer's death. The grief process has no timetable and survivors may develop a complicated grief process. More than half of the surviving spouses can be expected to develop a post-traumatic stress reaction to the tragedy.
- Survivors should continue to feel a part of the "police family." They should be invited to Police Department activities to ensure continued contact.
- Members of the Police Department 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.
- The Chief of Police should observe the officer's death date with a short note to the family and/or flowers on the grave.
- 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.
- The Family Liaison acts as a long-term liaison with the surviving family who ensures that close contact is maintained between the Police Department and the survivors and that their needs are met for as long as they feel the need for support.

- If no court proceedings surround the circumstances of the officer's death, the Family Liaison will relay all details of the incident to the family at the earliest opportunity.
  
- If criminal violations surround the death, the Family Liaison will:
  - a. Inform the family of all new developments prior to the press release
  
  - b. Keep the family apprised of legal and parole proceedings;
  
  - c. Introduce the family to the Victim Services Officer;
  
  - 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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Dean Esserman  
Chief of Police

12/19/2011

Date