

Agency Death or Critical Injury

Index Code: 406.1

Effective Date: 1/4/2022

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide members of the Queen Anne's County Office of the Sheriff with guidelines and protocols regarding the death or critical injury of any office personnel.

II. Policy

It shall be the policy of the Queen Anne's County Office of the Sheriff to provide compassionate support to members and their families following the death or critical injury of any office personnel. The immediate family shall have the final say if there are any disagreements arising in the planning of assistance for critically injured or deceased employees and their families as long as the accommodations can be made legally and reasonably.

III. Definitions

For the purpose of this directive, the following terms have the associated meanings.

A. On-duty Death or Critical Injury

An on-duty death or critical injury is defined as a death or critical injury occurring any time an employee is on duty or acting in a capacity of a law enforcement officer discharging their duties.

B. Off-duty Death or Critical Injury

An off-duty death or critical injury is defined as a death or critical injury occurring any time an employee is off duty and not acting in a capacity of a law enforcement officer discharging their duties.

C. Family Liaison

A family liaison is a deputy assigned to the family by the Sheriff or his/her designee. Any specific requests of an employee made by the family to fill this position shall be considered and given first priority unless circumstances prevent it.

D. Funeral Liaison Commander (FLC)

A funeral liaison commander is a sworn officer, preferably a member of the Command Staff,

appointed by the Sheriff or his/her designee to coordinate the funeral activities with the funeral directors and the Family Liaison.

E. Public information Officer (PIO)

The PIO coordinates with the media and public to release pertinent information regarding the incident and affected employee.

F. Benefits Coordinator

The benefits coordinator is the Office of the Sheriff employee designated with human resources responsibilities who will assist the surviving family in obtaining all benefits to which they are entitled.

G. Family

The family consists of immediate family members of the deceased or injured employee to include spouse, parents, children, siblings, fiancée, or significant other, and any other person the family dictates as family.

H. Honors (Line of Duty Death)

A Deputy killed in the line of duty is entitled to the following honors:

1. Honor /Color Guard
2. Casket Watch
3. Mourning bands & County flag at half-staff (30 days)
4. Full honors during the funeral

I. Honors (Line of Duty Death Civilian or Auxiliary Deputy)

A civilian or auxiliary deputy killed in the line of duty is entitled to the following honors:

1. Honor/Color Guard
2. Casket Watch
3. Mourning bands & County flag at half-staff (day of death through funeral)
4. Honors during funeral as requested by the family.

J. Honors (Off-duty deaths)

A deputy, Auxiliary deputy, or a civilian death occurring off-duty is entitled to the following honors:

1. Mourning bands for 24 hours on the day of the funeral service
2. Color/Honor Guard (if requested by family)

K. Casket Watch

Casket watch is required for a line of duty death. Casket watch is the constant guarding of the employee once the body has been prepared for viewing. This honor is performed on a 24 hour basis.

L. Notifications

The Sheriff or his/her designee shall be responsible for notifying the PIO and the immediate family of the affected employee.

M. Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS)

COPS is a national organization with chapters in nearly every state. COPS provides financial, emotional, and peer support to agencies, employees, and families during a critical injury or line of duty death. The Maryland Chapter of COPS shall be notified as soon as practical.

IV. General Provisions

A. Death/Critical Injury Notification

Upon confirmation of an employee's death or critical injury, notification by the shift supervisor shall be made to the division commander of the affected employee. The Division Commander shall immediately notify their superiors through the Chain of Command.

B. Family Notification

Immediately following the notification of the appropriate members of the agency, the Sheriff or his/her designee, preferably a member of command staff, will conduct the notification of the family. Notification MUST be made in person. If the affected employee is critically injured, the immediate family shall be immediately transported to the medical facility if they desire.

C. Public Information Release

All communications related to the incident and affected employee shall be handled through the PIO. All contact with the media shall be conducted by the PIO. At no time shall the affected employee's name be released to the media or public prior to notification of the family. If the name of the affected employee has been obtained by the media, the PIO shall request that the media withhold the name until the family has been notified. All press conferences, media releases, and social media posts authorized by the Office shall be coordinated through the PIO.

D. Family Liaison

A family liaison shall be appointed as soon as practical to assist the immediate family of the affected employee. The family liaison shall assist in coordinating with the family, command staff, and medical facility staff to ensure that the needs of the family are being met. The family liaison shall also coordinate with the Maryland Chapter of COPS to assist in setting up a reception area for visitors at the medical facility. The family liaison shall be responsible to provide updates to the command staff on the condition of the employee and any needs or requests from the family.

In the event of a death, the family liaison works closely with the Funeral Liaison Commander to ensure that the needs and requests of the family are met. The family liaison shall be available to the family at all times to assist with their needs.

E. Funeral Liaison Commander

In the event of a line of duty death, the Funeral Liaison Commander shall be responsible for coordinating the funeral activities.

1. Direct all agency and visiting jurisdictions during the funeral.
2. Coordinate with the PIO any public information releases regarding funeral arrangements.
3. Scheduling color/honor guards, pallbearers, traffic control, and serve as a liaison for visiting jurisdictions.
4. Ensure the residence of the employee receives routine checks during the funeral service
5. Meet with the family, family liaison, and the funeral director regarding funeral arrangements.

6. Be constantly available to the surviving family and funeral director.
7. Coordinating Casket Watch.

F. Benefits and Donations

The benefits coordinator shall be responsible for:

1. Notifying the Department of Human Resources of the critical injury or death of an employee.
2. Ensure the first line report of injury is completed and submitted.
3. Coordinate with the Department of Human Resources to ensure all entitled benefits are activated for the affected employee of their family.
4. In the event of a death, coordinate with the Maryland Chapter of COPS to file for state and Federal line of duty death benefits.
5. Serving as the point of contact for donations and monies to support the affected employee and/or their family. The Benefits coordinator is encouraged to work with The Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 108 to coordinate and manage the funds if the affected employee is a member of the lodge.

V. CALEA References: None

VI. Proponent Unit: Sheriff's Office

VII. Cancellation: Policy dated 4/25/17

Sheriff Gary Hofmann