

DEATH / SERIOUS INJURY NOTIFICATION

PURPOSE: To assist all officers in becoming familiar with procedures to be used to provide next-of-kin and other family members with adequate information and support when notifying them of the death or serious injury of a family member.

POLICY: Death or serious injury notification will be accomplished in a manner consistent with professionally accepted crisis intervention techniques.

PROCEDURES:

I. GATHERING OF INFORMATION AND PREPARING FOR NOTIFICATION ASSIGNMENT

- A. All death and serious injury notifications made by this Department will be made in person, with the exception of a serious injury notification where the delay in notification might prevent the family from arriving at the hospital before the injured person's death.
 - 1. Where possible, the Department Chaplain(s) shall assist the officer assigned to a death or serious injury notification.
 - 2. Officers shall be prepared to spend as much time as necessary with survivors to provide assistance.
 - 3. Prior to contacting next-of-kin, notification officers shall gather and become familiar with essential details concerning the deceased or seriously injured person, to include full name, age, race and home address. The notification officers shall be well informed as to the details of the death or serious injury, location of the body/personal effects and any other pertinent information.
- B. Next-of-Kin Notification:
 - 1. Notification officers shall establish the identity of the next-of-kin of the deceased or seriously injured person for purposes of notification.
 - 2. The order of priority for notification will be the spouse, followed by parents, brothers and/or sisters, then any children. Where time permits parents should be notified after notification of spouse. Such order should be followed except in circumstances such as:
 - a. Where substantial delays would be required to make contact with next-of-kin should other family members be contacted; and
 - b. Notification officers should contact the Shift Supervisor for guidance when in doubt concerning next-of-kin or any delay/problems in notification.
 - 3. When another Agency must be contacted to notify the next-of-kin, officers should:
 - a. Request that the notification be made in person, and
 - b. Request immediate verification when notification has been accomplished.
- C. Notification officers should gather available information concerning the survivors that may aid in notification. This information would include whether survivors are elderly, disabled, visually or hearing impaired, have medical problems or may not speak English. If possible, obtain the names of the survivor's closest relative, friend, family doctor, and clergy. Notification officers should request the assistance of a local minister, preferably the survivor's minister, where feasible.
- D. Officers will not use the name of the deceased or seriously injured person over the radio and will not release name to news media until assured that next-of-kin notification has been made.