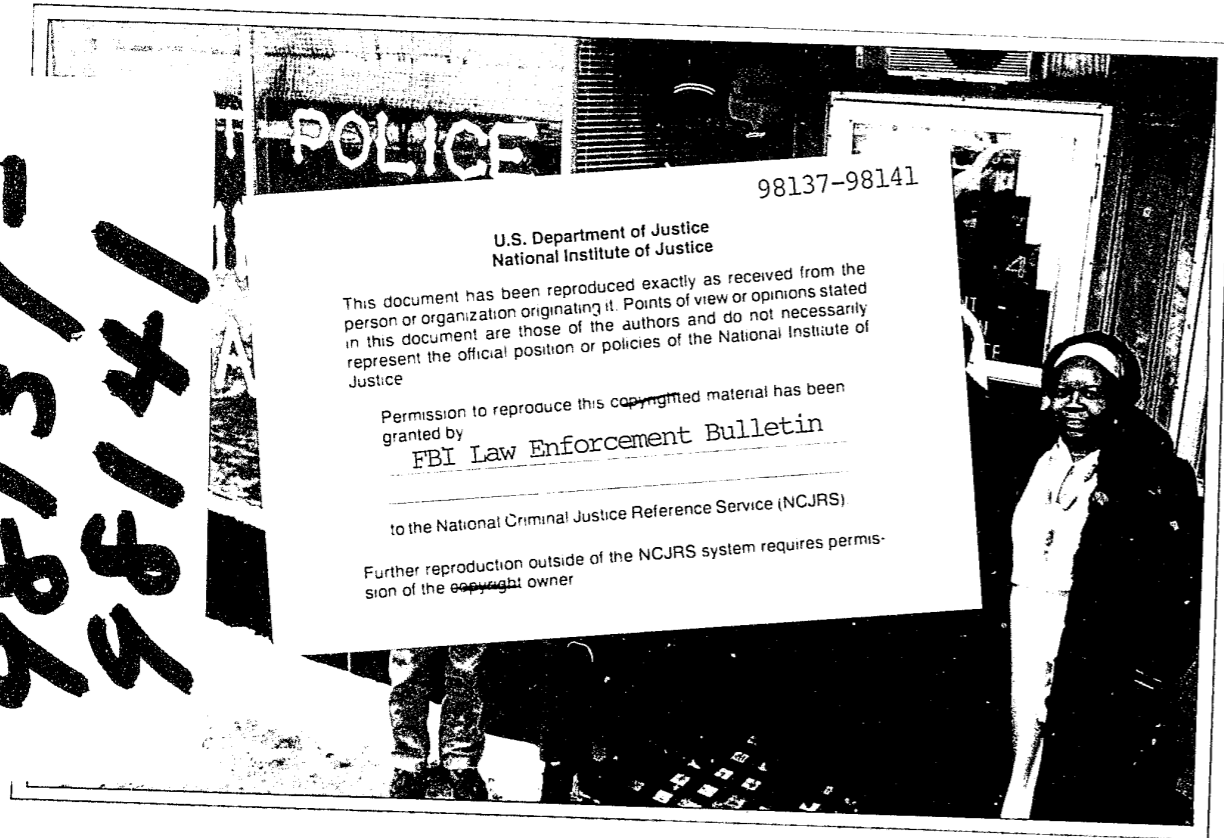


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Public Safety Employee Support Procedure

"The key to a successful employee survivor support operation for public safety organizations is preparation and preplanning."

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When a public safety employee is killed or seriously injured, the involved agency has a moral and ethical responsibility to render psychological, social, and technical support to the surviving family members. In order to meet the needs of the family adequately, agencies must have a pre-conceived plan that can be immediately activated to ensure a relatively smooth and thorough assistance program.

Preplanning

The key to a successful employee survivor support operation for public safety organizations is preparation and preplanning. The goals of the preplanning stage are to collect information necessary to notify and support the family adequately, to create a family support procedure (FSP), and to designate persons responsible for implementing the family support procedure.

The public safety function by its nature has the potential for life-threatening situations on a 24-hour a day, 365 day per year basis. In order to implement an FSP, a public safety agency must have the information

necessary to contact family members at all times. A tragic scenario involves the spouse or children of a slain police officer learning about the death from a radio or television broadcast. It is important that a public safety agency make every attempt possible to notify family members personally within the shortest period of time possible. This requires accurate, up-to-date information regarding spouse's employment and children's schools, as well as other pertinent data. (See fig. 1.) It is recommended that this information be updated at least yearly and that it be made immediately accessible to designated personnel on a 24-hour basis.

A public safety agency should designate the highest ranking on-duty officer not primarily involved in the handling or investigation of the incident as the official in charge of implementing the FSP. It is this individual's responsibility to ensure immediate notification and to supervise efforts to meet the family's immediate needs. A public safety agency family support plan should also be created and standardized to the extent that it can be initiated as a step-by-step procedure but at the same time remain flexible enough to be adaptable to the different situations that may arise.

impact of the project on them. Employees performing at the exceptional level consistently indicated that they wanted to be "number one" in the unit. They saw their performance as a way to achieve promotions and desired transfers. They stated that they would work harder if the work standards were raised—they did not want to be less than exceptional. The superior-level employees stated that they wanted to be above average but not necessarily the best. These employees were particularly appreciative of the additional freedom they had at work as a result of the changes in policy and their superior performance. The fully successful group—more than 50 percent of the unit—indicated that they wanted to accomplish what was expected of them. One employee stated that the job was much easier once management identified its expectations. Virtually all of the fully successful employees had improved their performance substantially over the life of the project.

In addition to the positive results achieved in the area of productivity, there were dramatic gains made in the area of employee satisfaction. Satisfaction is very closely related to employee absenteeism and turnover.³ During this project, absenteeism was reduced by over 20 percent. Even more significant was the 50-percent reduction in turnover within the unit during this time. Numerous employees

indicated in informal discussions that their morale had improved considerably. They stated that the work climate was more relaxed and enjoyable. Two employees described an advantage of the work standards that had not been anticipated by management. Both employees stated that they had previously been harassed by their supervisors regardless of what they did. The identification of an objective level of performance brought an element of fairness to the entire supervisor/employee relationship and prevented the supervisor from being subjective and capricious in dealing with subordinates. The only evident goal of these two people seemed to be to avoid being hassled by their supervisor.

Conclusion

In their best-selling book, *In Search of Excellence*, Peters and Waterman emphasize that exceptional organizations are able to attain higher performance from the average employee.⁴ This is the true challenge for managers! Anybody could lead an organization comprised exclusively of outstanding people. Platitudes aside, a substantial majority of the people in all organizations are not exceptional. Still, these people believe that they are special, and organizations must learn how to make them feel valued. Organizations that are able to reinforce the natural and perfectly normal

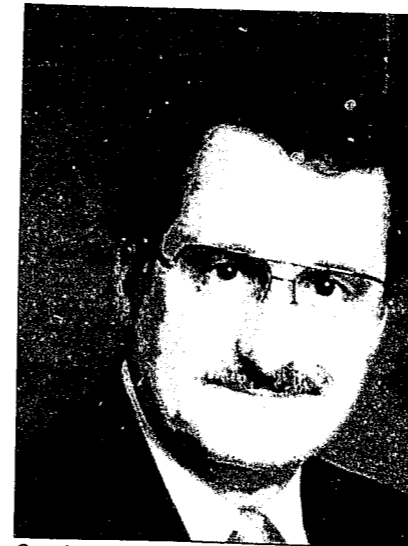
"good feelings" people have about themselves and their work performance will reap the rewards of high productivity.

It is essential for people to believe that their work is important to the organization and that the organization cares about them as individuals. Management techniques such as goal setting and job enrichment can facilitate these management tasks. Both techniques clarify for the employees exactly what is expected of them by the organization. As people begin to fulfill these expectations, organizational leaders must recognize and reward them for this behavioral change. Concerned and enlightened law enforcement managers can achieve higher productivity from their personnel. It is possible for the organization to win with higher productivity and employees to win with more rewarding and challenging work.

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Footnotes

- ¹ *Crime in the U.S.* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), p. 260.
- ² Richard M. Steers and Lyman W. Porter, *Motivation and Work Behavior* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
- ³ Edward Lawler III, *Motivation and Work Behavior*, eds. Richard M. Steers and Lyman W. Porter (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 287-301.
- ⁴ Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence* (NY: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 86.



Captain Porth



Mr. Geiger

Notification

Notifying family members of an injured or killed public safety employee in an effective, caring, and speedy manner is extremely important. The support offered to the family within the first hours can be viewed as psychological first aid. Quality support can reduce psychological trauma and aid the recovery process. Every attempt should be made to notify the family before other sources, such as radio, television, or friends. This will give the family immediate support rather than them facing the ordeal alone.

The notification should be made by at least two persons and not more than three. It is suggested that one person be the officer in charge of implementing the procedure. Wives of Minnesota peace officers killed in the line of duty believe this person should not be the officer's immediate supervisor, if at all possible. This person should be aware of the basic details of the incident. He should also be trained in "death/severe injury notification." The second person should be a mental health professional, such as a clergyman, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, or another professional knowledgeable in crisis counseling and the grieving process. This person must also be trained in death notification and should be totally familiar and comfortable with the function of the particular public safety organization. The third person might be a close friend of the family. However, close friends often are not initially helpful because they themselves are significantly affected by the incident.

Since time is a critical element, the mental health professional must be accessible. If they are not available upon the first call, the notification should be made by two public safety officials. Once again, it is stressed that these people be trained to handle family support situations.

Immediate Support

Immediate support refers to servicing needs that typically arise from the time of the notification until the funeral is over or the injured party returns home. Since many needs are common, a public safety agency can anticipate their occurrence and address them in their FSP. These needs would include:

- 1) *Transportation needs*—An agency may wish to assign a car and a driver to the family.
- 2) *Child-care needs*—An employee could be assigned for child care until a volunteer or paid help is arranged. It may be useful to take a child-care person to the home when notifying the spouse in case she wishes to proceed directly to the hospital.
- 3) *Prepared meals*—Prepared meals brought to the home frees the family from this time-consuming task.
- 4) *Public/media liaison needs*—A family should be insulated from those segments of the public that might attempt to exploit the family during a time of extreme vulnerability. An employee or volunteer should be assigned to screen phone calls and visitors.
- 5) *Protection*—A familiar burglary MO involves the burglary of a home of a bereaving family during a funeral or while the family is visiting the injured

Figure 1 EMPLOYEE EMERGENCY INFORMATION SHEET

Employee name _____ DOB _____
 address _____ home phone _____
 position _____ date of employment _____

Spouse's name _____
 Home address _____ home phone _____
 Work address _____ work phone _____
 Place of employment _____

Names of children
 name _____ DOB _____
 Address _____ home phone _____
 School & address _____ phone _____

name _____ DOB _____
 address _____ home phone _____
 School & address _____ phone _____

name _____ DOB _____
 address _____ home phone _____
 school & address _____ phone _____

Hospitalization Insurance _____
 Physician/Medical Group _____ phone _____
 Significant medical history _____

Medication use _____
 Allergies to medication _____
 Dental insurance _____
 Dentist _____ phone _____
 Religion _____
 Church affiliation _____
 address _____ phone _____
 Attorney _____
 address _____ phone _____

Any special information _____

person in the hospital. In one case, the home of a victim of a fatal traffic accident was burglarized while the family was identifying the body. To protect against this loss, a public safety employee should be assigned to stay at the house when the family is away.

6) *Funeral arrangements*—A public safety agency may offer to help the family contact a funeral home in order to make the necessary arrangements. The agency should assist, not take control. The funeral is an important ritual within the grieving process. Family members giving up this task may regret their actions at a later date.

7) *Need for information*—When the death or injury of a public safety employee involves a criminal act, the family should be kept informed of developments or progress of the case prior to the media.

Long Term Support

The long term support period begins after the funeral or a short time after the injury occurs and lasts until the family is once again functioning normally. Often, the beginning of this phase is marked by the sudden decline of support which was once overabundant. This is unfortunate since the family is more in need of support during this time.

We are not suggesting that a public safety agency fund all the services a family of a slain or injured officer may require—this is a decision for each agency. We do, however, recommend that an agency be aware of the needs of a family and assist in meeting those needs as much as possible.

“[Psychological] counseling should continue until the family and the department believe it is no longer necessary.”

Legal Considerations

Numerous legal issues arise when a public safety officer dies. Perhaps the most confusing to survivors are the death benefits furnished by Federal, State, and private organizations. The following is a list of benefits available to families of peace officers who lose their lives in the line of duty and those who die off duty. It is recommended that the public safety agency provide a liaison person who can assist survivors in applying for these benefits.

- 1) Benefit from the U.S. Government for peace officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty (\$50,000) as stated in Public Law 94-403. Correspond with Office of Justices Programs/Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, 633 Indiana Avenue, Washington, DC 20531.
- 2) Benefits for peace officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty while enforcing a Federal law (amount varies). Refer to Title 5, U.S.C. Sec. 8101. Correspond with Chief, Branch of Special Claims, Employee Standards Administration, Office of Federal Employee Compensation, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20211.
- 3) Benefit from deceased officer's retirement plan (amount varies). Correspond with appropriate State, county, or city retirement plan coordinator.

- 4) Benefit from the U.S. Government for deceased officers who qualify under social security (amount varies). Refer to the Social Security Act. Correspond with the nearest office of the Social Security Administration.
- 5) Benefits for deceased peace officers who are qualified veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces (amount varies). Refer to the Veterans Administration Act. Correspond with the nearest office of the Veterans Administration.
- 6) Benefits from associations and organizations in which the deceased officer was a member. Correspond with appropriate organizations.
- 7) Benefit from lawsuit brought against the person responsible for the officer's death. Consult with a private attorney regarding feasibility of such a lawsuit.

Long Term Counseling

When a public safety officer dies, the likelihood is great that the survivors will need on-going counseling in the form of psychological counseling, career counseling, and/or financial counseling. The availability of professionals trained in these areas varies by geographic region. Public safety agencies should create a written list of individuals and organizations who could meet the needs of the survivors. This list should be designed in such a way that it could be given directly to the surviving family members as a reference and resource guide.

Psychological Counseling

The grief associated with an unexpected death can be overwhelming for the family. It is not unusual for the surviving spouse to temporarily lose touch with daily tasks such as grocery shopping, paying bills, or feeding the children. This period, commonly referred to as the shock stage of the grieving process, may last from hours to a period of weeks. A department representative trained in counseling should make periodic contact (daily to weekly as needed) to offer support and to check for unmet needs. This counseling should continue until the family and the department believe it is no longer necessary.

Career Counseling

Some surviving spouses may be forced into entering full time employment. These individuals may be unsure about possible career/employment options available to them. A trained career counselor may be able to assist in helping survivors make logical and productive decisions.

Financial Counseling

Some surviving spouses may not have the basic understanding or skills necessary to perform tasks such as balancing checking accounts, keeping records for income tax purposes, or purchasing household-auto insurance. Those who encounter these difficulties may find it helpful to take a class in personal money management or be personally counseled by a money management counselor. Many financial institutions provide this service at low or no cost.

Posttraumatic Incident Counseling

Public safety officers who survive a severe injury or a perceived close

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encounter with death often exhibit posttraumatic stress disorder. This psychological manifestation is often characterized by recurring dreams of the event, sleep disturbance, fatigue, flashbacks to the event, extreme feelings of guilt, and avoidance of activities that arouse recollections of the event. The ramifications of posttraumatic stress disorder can be lessened with prompt counseling for the officer and his family. Many law enforcement agencies require posttraumatic incident counseling, while others offer it as an option. When selecting a professional for this task, it is important that he be familiar with this particular disorder and the intricacies of the public safety service.

Conclusion

Public safety agencies have a responsibility to anticipate the needs that a public safety officer or his family may have at a time of serious injury or death. This family support procedure was designed to assist agencies to prepare for such events so that better and more sensitive assistance can be rendered to surviving family members.

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NCJRS Announces New Service

The National Institute of Justice (NCJRS) announces a unique new service to help State and local agencies build criminal justice libraries quickly and economically. NCJRS information specialists search the NCJRS 77,000-document data base, plus other data bases and information sources, to select candidates for the new collection after the agency has indicated the topics it wants covered. Once the final selection is made, NCJRS takes over some or all of the details of ordering the books, paying for them, cataloging them, and preparing them for shelving.

The NCJRS Document Ordering Service is designed to let public and private criminal justice agencies throughout the country take advantage of the information contacts and library-building expertise of the world's largest criminal justice reference service. The service saves the local agencies time, since NCJRS's existing ordering, bill-paying, cataloging, and shelving operations are used. It saves the agencies money as well because of the efficiencies an experienced, large-volume operation like NCJRS can implement.

Organizations interested in acquiring NCJRS's criminal justice library-building services should write the National Institute of Justice/NCJRS Document Ordering Service, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20850, or call 800/851-3420 (in Maryland and DC area call 301/251-5500) to set up an appointment to discuss the service with an NCJRS librarian.

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