

La Plata Police Department – General Order

	Title: Line-of-Duty Death		Order #: 425	
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Approved by: Chief Carl Schinner				CALEA 5 th Edition
22.2.4, 22.2.5, 22.2.6				Pages: 8

01 PURPOSE: The purpose of this order is to alleviate the trauma following the loss of an officer by preparing for such a tragedy in advance. It includes information regarding family support, benefits and funeral arrangements. It is the Department’s heartfelt desire that we will never be called upon to use this document.

02 POLICY: The Department will provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of an officer who dies in the line of duty. The assistance is provided whether the death is unlawful or accidental (i.e. automobile collision, hit by a passing vehicle during a traffic stop, training accident) while the officer was performing a police-related function, either on or off-duty, within or outside the jurisdiction and while he/she was an active officer with the La Plata Police. The Chief of Police may institute certain parts of this order to cases of an officer’s natural/accidental death. The La Plata Police Department will also provide clarification and a comprehensive study of survivors’ benefits as well as emotional support during this traumatic period of readjustment for the surviving family. Funeral arrangements of the deceased officer are to be decided by the family, with their wishes taking precedence over the Department’s.

03 COORDINATION:

A. Coordination of events following the line-of-duty death of an officer is an extremely important and complex responsibility. Professionalism and compassion must be exhibited at all times as an obligation to the officer’s survivors and to the law enforcement community. In order to provide the best possible services and support for the officer’s family, specific tasks may be assigned to selected officers of the Department. The tasks are the following:

1. Notification Officer;
2. Hospital Liaison Officer;
3. Family Liaison Officer;
4. Department Liaison Officer; and,
5. Benefits Coordinator.

- B.** An explanation of each of these responsibilities is contained in this order. An officer may be called upon to perform more than one role.
- C.** Officers are to provide an up-to-date “Confidential Line-of-Duty Death Information” card in the Communications Office. Officers are to provide an up-to-date “Confidential Line-of-Duty Death Information” form in their personnel jacket. The information will be of extreme comfort to officers’ families and the Department in fulfilling the deceased officer’s wishes.
- D.** This order is based upon guidelines suggested in the handbook entitled, “Support Services to Surviving Families of Line of Duty Death,” by Suzanne F. Sawyer, the Executive Director of Concerns of Police Survivors, Inc. (COPS), based in Camdenton, Missouri.

04 PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

NOTIFICATIONS

A. It is the responsibility of the Shift Supervisor to properly notify the next of kin of an officer who has suffered severe injury. The Shift Supervisor may personally make the notification or designate a NOTIFICATION OFFICER to inform the family.

- B. The name of the deceased officer will not be released to the press by the Department before the immediate family is notified.
 - C. If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate survivor, medical personnel shall be available at the residence at the time of notification.
 - D. Notification will be made in person and never alone. The Chief of Police or his/her designee, Crisis Intervention counselor, police chaplain, family clergy, close friend or another police survivor should appropriately accompany the NOTIFICATION OFFICER if death has already occurred. However, if the aforementioned persons are not readily available, notification should not be delayed until these people can gather. **If there is an opportunity to get to the hospital prior to the demise of the officer, do not wait for the delegation to gather.** The family should learn of the death from the Department first and not from the press or other sources.
 - E. Never make a death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted into the residence. Inform the 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".
 - F. 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 the family insists on driving, an officer should accompany them in the family car.
 - G. If young children are at home, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER must arrange for childcare needs. This may involve co-worker's spouses, transportation of children to a relative's home, use of the Crisis Intervention Counselors or similar arrangements.
 - H. Prior to departing for the hospital the NOTIFICATION OFFICER should notify the hospital staff and the HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER (by telephone if possible) that an officer(s) family is enroute to the hospital.
 - I. The deceased or severely injured officer's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification whenever possible.
 - J. If immediate survivors live beyond the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER will ensure that the Charles County Communications Center sends a teletype message to the appropriate jurisdiction requesting a personal notification. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER should 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 Department.
 - K. The Chief of Police or a high-ranking representative should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet the family as quickly as possible.
 - L. In the event of an on-duty death, the external monitoring of police frequencies may be extensive. Whenever possible, communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone. If the media has obtained the officer's name, they will be advised to withhold the information, pending notification to the next of kin. The Department's PRESS INFORMATION OFFICER will make this request of the media.
- ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED OFFICERS**
- M. Officers, who were on the scene or who arrived moments after an officer was critically injured or killed, as well as the Charles Communication(s) Specialist, should be relieved as quickly as possible.

- N.** Police witnesses and other employees 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. The Chief of Police will arrange for the critical incident debriefing.

ASSISTING THE FAMILY AT THE HOSPITAL

- O.** The first command officer or his/her designee, preferable the rank of Sergeant or above, other than the Chief or his/her representative, to arrive at the hospital becomes the HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER. The HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER is responsible for coordinating the activities of the hospital personnel, the officer's family, police officers and the press. The responsibilities include:

1. Arrange with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, the Chief of Police, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER and others requested by the immediate survivors;
2. Arrange a separate area for fellow police officers to assemble;
3. Establish a press staging area; in conjunction with the DEPARTMENT LIAISON OFFICER;
4. Ensuring that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding an officer's condition to the family on a timely basis and before such information is released to others;
5. Notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased officer are directed to the La Plata Police Department's Administrative Services Division. The family should not receive any of these bills at their residence. This may require the HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER to re-contact the hospital during normal

business hours to ensure that proper billing takes place;

6. Ensuring that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital; and,
 7. Arranging transportation for the family back to their residence. An unmarked cruiser will be used when available.
- P.** 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.

- Q.** The NOTIFICATION OFFICER shall remain at the hospital while the family is present.

- R.** Do not be overly protective of the family. This includes sharing specific information as to how the officer met his/her demise, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased officer.

SUPPORT DURING THE WAKE AND FUNERAL

- S.** The Chief of Police, or a designee, will meet with the officer's family at their home to determine their wishes regarding Departmental participation in the preparation of the funeral or services. All possible assistance will be rendered.

- T.** With the approval of the family, the Chief will assign a FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER, the Chief will also designate a DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON OFFICER and a BENEFITS COORDINATOR.

05 DUTIES OF THE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER: (CALEA 22.2.5)

- A.** The selection of a FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER is a critical choice. An attempt should be made to assign someone who

enjoyed a close relationship with the officer and his/her family. When possible male/female “teams” should be utilized as FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS, thus preventing bonding between the survivor(s) and officers during a vulnerable time in the survivors lives.

B. This is not a decision making position, but a “facilitator” between the family and the Department.

C. Responsibilities of the FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER include the following:

1. Ensuring that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department;
2. Assisting the family with funeral arrangements and making them aware of what the Department can offer if they decide to have a police funeral. If they choose the latter, briefing the family on funeral procedure (i.e. presenting the flag, playing taps, firing party);
3. Apprising the family of information concerning the death and the continuing investigation;
4. Providing 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 care and transportation needs, etc;
5. Being constantly available to the family;
6. Determining what public safety, church, fraternal and labor organizations will provide in terms of financial assistance for out-of-town family travel and food for funeral attendees following the burial;
7. Notifying Concerns of Police Survivors, (573) 346-49111 and,
8. Carrying a pager/cell phone at all times.

06 DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON OFFICER:

A. The position is normally assigned to a Division Commander because of the need to effectively coordinate resources throughout the Department. The Chief of Police may need to assign two officers to this responsibility since the work load could be daunting.

B. Responsibilities of the DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON OFFICER include:

1. Working closely with the FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled;
2. Handling 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;
3. Meeting with the following people to coordinate funeral activities and establish an itinerary:
 - a. Chief of Police and Command Staff;
 - b. Funeral director;
 - c. Family priest, rabbi, or minister;
 - d. Cemetery director; and,
 - e. La Plata Police/Military Honor Guard Supervisor.
4. Issuing teletype message to include the following:
 - a. Name of deceased;
 - b. Date and time of death;
 - c. Circumstances surrounding the death;

- d. Funeral arrangements (state if service will be private or police funeral);
 - e. Uniform to be worn;
 - f. Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers; and
 - g. Contact person and phone number for visiting departments to call to indicate their desire to attend or to obtain further information.
5. Establishing a command center, if necessary, to coordinate information and response to the tragedy;
 6. Developing a policy for wearing of badge memorial ribbons and use of patrol vehicle memorial sashes;
 7. Obtaining an American flag. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief of Police, notify the Chief's Office;
 8. Determining if the family desires a burial in uniform and selecting an officer to obtain a uniform and all accoutrements (except weapon) and deliver them to the funeral home;
 9. Assigning officers for usher duty at the church;
 10. Arranging for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family;
 11. Briefing the Chief and staff concerning funeral arrangements;
 12. Ensuring that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged for them during the funeral procession;
 13. Arranging for a stand by doctor for the family, if necessary;
 14. Assigning an officer to remain at the family home during the funeral;
 15. Maintain a roster of all Departments sending personnel to the funeral including:
 - a. Name and address of responding agencies;
 - b. Name of the Chief of Police;
 - c. Number of officers attending;
 - d. Number of officers attending the reception after the funeral; and,
 - e. Number of vehicles.
 16. Assisting in making the necessary accommodations for food, lodging, etc;
 17. Acknowledge visiting and assisting departments; and,
 18. Arranging for routine residence checks of the survivor's home within the jurisdiction the survivor lives 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 time away from the home dealing with legal matter.
- 07 DUTIES OF THE BENEFITS COORDINATOR:**
- A.** The BENEFITS COORDINATOR will gather information on benefits/funeral payments available to the family. The BENEFITS COORDINATOR has the Department's full support to fulfill this responsibility to the survivors and is completely responsible for filling the appropriate benefit paperwork and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received.
 - B.** The BENEFITS COORDINATOR is responsible for the following:
 1. Completing Worker Compensation claims and related paperwork;

2. Contacting the appropriate Town officials to ensure that they file without delay any retirement and death benefits the officer is entitled to, and securing the officer's remaining pay checks and payment for remaining annual, sick and compensatory time;
 - a. If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should receive a printout of what benefits the child(ren) may be receiving;
 - b. Attention should be given to the revocation of health care benefits. Many providers allow a 30-day grace period before canceling or imposing monthly payments upon survivors; and,
3. Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments including the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act (Federal Government) that are available to the family;
4. Contact the State of Maryland to assist in the family in obtaining benefits officers killed in the line-of-duty.
5. Assist the surviving spouse or dependent in obtaining benefits from the Maryland State Retirement Agency (MSRA).
6. Assist the surviving spouse and/or dependent(s) in obtaining benefits from the Social Security Administration.
7. Assist the surviving spouse and/or dependent(s) in obtaining Veteran's Benefits (if applicable).
8. Setting up any special trust and education funds;
9. Notifying police organizations such as HEROS Inc. and the Fraternal Order of Police, of the death and ensuring that any and all entitlement are paid to the beneficiary. These agencies may also offer legal and financial counseling to the family at no cost;
10. Preparing a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that are due to the family, listing named beneficiaries and contacts at various benefits offices, and when they can expect to receive payment;
11. Meeting 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.
 12. Meeting again with the family in about six months to ensure they are receiving benefits.

08 CRISIS INTERVENTION

COUNSELORS: The Chief of Police, or his/her designee, may use the County's Crisis Intervention Counselors at his/her discretion in counseling, debriefing or other areas of mental health were deemed appropriate.

09 CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY:

- A.** Officers of the Department must remain sensitive to the needs of the survivors long after the officer's death. The grief process has no timetable. More than half of the surviving spouses can be expected to develop a posttraumatic stress reaction to the tragedy.
- B.** Survivors should continue to feel as a part of the "police family." They should be invited to Department activities to ensure continued contact.
- C.** Officers of the 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.

- D.** The Chief of Police should observe the officer's death date with a short note to the family, flowers on the grave and/or wreath placement at the National Law Enforcement Memorial.
- E.** 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.
- F.** The FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER acts as a long-term liaison with the surviving family to ensure that close contact is maintained between the Department and the survivors and that their needs are met for as long as they feel the need for support.
- G.** If no court proceedings surround the circumstances the officer's death, the FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER will relay all details of the incident to the family at the earliest opportunity.
- H.** If criminal violations surround the death, the FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER will:
 1. Inform the family of all new developments prior to any press releases;
 2. Keep the family apprised of legal proceedings;
 3. Introduce the family to the victim's assistance specialist of the court as soon as the family is emotionally able to do so;
 4. Encourage the family to attend the trial, and accompany them whenever possible; and,
 5. Arrange for investigators to meet with the family at the earliest opportunity following the trial to answer all their questions.

10 DEPARTMENTAL HONORS:

- A.** The following Departmental Honors will be offered to the family of officers killed in the line-of-duty:

1. Departmental Honor Guard;
2. Uniformed presence during any viewing and/or funeral;
3. Uniformed pallbearers;
4. Traffic control planning and execution;
5. A Departmental photographer will be assigned to photograph the funeral, if requested by the family.

- B.** In addition to those honors listed above, the performance of Taps on a bugle during the interment ceremony and rifle salute.

- C.** Death Watch: The Death Watch is normally staffed by members of the Departmental Honor Guard. All officers assigned to this detail must display proper military bearing and conform to all current grooming standards. The class "A" dress uniform with white gloves and hat will be worn by all members of the detail. The Death Watch will remain on duty during all public viewing hours. The officers participating in the Death Watch will stand at opposite ends of the deceased's casket for a period of time specified by the supervisor.

- D.** Bag pipe performance during the interment ceremony.

- E.** Presentation of the United States and/or Maryland flag.

- F.** Police motorcycle escort of the hearse from the funeral home to the church.

- G.** Uniformed officers to act as pallbearers.

11 UNIFORM:

- A.** The class "A" dress uniform with badge shroud, white gloves and hat will be worn by all uniformed officers attending the police funeral. This may be waived by the Chief of Police for those officers serving in plain clothing assignment.

- B.** When a La Plata Police Officer dies in the line-of-duty, a black badge shroud will be

worn for thirty (30) days commencing on the day of the death.

- C. When an officer from an allied agency dies in the State of Maryland, officers will wear black badge shrouds from the day of the officer's death until 2400 hours on the day of the funeral.

12 PROCEDURAL VARIATION:

- A. The procedures outlined in this Order will be followed in most cases. Any variations necessitated by shortage of personnel, size of the funeral, the type of funeral service, the physical arrangement of the place of service or any other reason, will be made by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- B. Any additional honors to be accorded to deceased officers of this Department or other law enforcement agencies will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

