

Family Liaison Officer Checklist

Family Advocate Team

As soon as practical (desirable within 24 hours) a planning meeting is to be schedule with the family and the assigned Family Advocate Team to discuss the departments role in the funeral, etc. The decisions made at this meeting will provide important information to the planning and logistics efforts as the department prepares for an honorable service(s) for our fallen. This meeting should be limited to the immediate family. There is no doubt this will be an emotional meeting. Do not put a time frame on the meeting and hold it in a comfortable neutral setting. This meeting is to explain the different ceremonies available to the family, ensure their wishes are met and the role the family wants the department to implement.

It is very important that the Family Advocate Team explains all options to the family regarding service types and the department's involvement before any decisions are made. Be prepared to discuss all aspects of the funeral process and counsel the family in their decisions.

One of the most important first decisions that will need to be made is the location of the memorial/funeral service. Explain to the family that a traditional police/fire department services could bring many public and emergency service personnel, thus requiring a large venue. Explain the department is willing to organize such a venue. Let the family know if the decision is made to proceed with a traditional death of service (depending on the type of death) the family will be consulted on every detail, if desired. Make the family aware if there will be a full traditional service more time (3-5 days) may be required to facilitate the ceremony.

There is always the possibility that the family will refuse all department assistance. If that happens tell the family "we will respectfully honor your wishes". You will still need to retain contact with the family to assist with other details.

Some religions require that the deceased is buried or cremated within a three-day period. If these restraints are present, it becomes more important that the process moves rapidly!

- Assist with next of kin notifications
- Conduct a Family Planning Meeting
- Determine religious preference
- Ensure the family can contact the Team anytime

- Ensure the family receives all eligible benefits
- Assist the family with review of bills or other paperwork
- Obtain all the members personal belongings from department and provide them to the family
- If appropriate, go with the family to the funeral home and assist with arrangements.
- Obtain any law enforcement reports for the family.
- Meet with IC to discuss arrangements
- Meet with Benefits Coordinator to discuss paychecks, insurance, etc.
- Find out who is considered "Immediate Family". Obtain phone #'s etc. Who will represent the family?
- Find out who will obtain death certificates (probably funeral home).
- Find out cemetery plot #.
- How will family be transported to service, funeral, etc.?
- If service will be at a church, they will probably require a run through of service.
- If family is not religious or designated church, do they want chaplain to run service? You may have to assist in obtaining a facility for the service.
- Does the family want a viewing, if so where and how long? Open casket? Buried in uniform? You may have to arrange a uniform for the deceased.
- Will there be songs played at the memorial?
- Will any family members speak at the memorial/service?
- You may need to get copies of the autopsy report, if one is done.
- Find out if family needs support for paying for funeral, etc. Provide sources of benevolent funds
- Will there be a memorial fund set up anywhere? Fund in lieu of flowers?

- Will there be a “Celebration of Life”?
- Possible help with coordination of family coming from out of town, work with Family representative on this.
- What photo(s) do they want released to media. Any photos at service?
- Who will be the pall bearers?
- Does the family want media at the service(s)?
- Depending on the type of service the family desires, go over EACH step of the service with them. When first gone over the emotions will be so high they will not remember, so go over several times in the next day or so. Spend time with family spokesperson to make sure this person understands what will happen.
- What is the number of seats for family at memorial/service?
- The Department may video the service, etc. Does family want copies? How many?
- Who will pay for the cost of the facility?
- Will the funeral home bring tables for registers, table cloths, pens, basket for cards and other material for the service?
- If asked, get a “Thank you” list for the family.

After Care

It is the responsibility of the department to assist the surviving family(s) during recovery from the devastating event of a member’s death. There are many details, paperwork, and steps that the department can assist the family(s) with. This assistance may extend over a long period of time (6 months or more). The FLO is charged with providing the necessary assistance. The FLO may need to recruit individuals with special expertise to assist with this function. After care may require a generous time commitment, but as details are handled the work load should diminish. The surviving family should always be considered one of our own.

After care responsibilities include, but may not be limited to:

- Assisting the family(s) with the completion of all forms for benefits.
- As appropriate, review all bills before payment by survivors for legality, honesty, and accuracy. This should include last illness, previous debts,

and funeral expenses. Some bills may be covered by insurance, or otherwise not legally due.

- Assist as necessary and appropriate the facilitation of changing of titles and bank accounts etc.
- Access to grief counseling
- Provide invitations to related City and Department functions.
- The Team needs to take care of their selves. This has been a very emotional experience. The team will have probably gotten very close to the family and now have a special relationship with them. It will be difficult to distance yourselves but this must be done.
- The Team needs to make contact with the principle family(s) at least once a month for 6 months.
- The department needs to make contact with the principle family around the year anniversary of the death.