

Building Healthy Law Enforcement Family Connections

Law Enforcement families come from unique backgrounds with a variety of capabilities and experiences. Providing resources for the development of family law enforcement skills and knowledge will contribute to stronger department/family connections, increased family preparedness and positively impact peace officers stress levels.

Best Practices for Departments

Department Orientation

We provide multi format family communications that include information about/on:

- the mission of public safety and the role and purpose of our law enforcement branch/office/department
- the para military organization and it's rules and regulations
- the rank structure within the department/office
- special units and offices within our law enforcement branch
- the 'use of force' continuum
- gun safety, gun locks and secure storage for all law enforcement weapons & lethal tools

Critical Incidents

We provide information in family friendly formats on:

- department/office/district MEDICAL critical incident procedures
- creating a written critical incident plan for families (updated in the past 12 months)
- creating emergency child/pet/elder care plans for families
- the department/office sequence of events during a critical incident
- supervisor/bosses contact information to use in the event of a critical incident
- facilitate inter department/office family to family connections through a variety of social, educational and support functions
- forms that would allow families to identify their contact protocol in the event of a critical incident
- forms that provide preferred CI family procedures for schools and work places
- clergy notification templates for any CI incidents

Health & Emergencies

Our department/office/district families have access to health and emergency training and information that allows them to understand;

- chemical, biological, and radiological weapons of mass destruction, and knowledge about where to find more information about potential threats
- the general process of first responder medication distribution specific to the community and department
- the difference between isolation and quarantine, and when each may be used as tools to protect the public health
- different types of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that may be used during and emergency
- protocol for suspected symptoms of hazardous exposures (i.e. mercury, fumes etc.)

Stress Management

Our department/office provides resources & information for families to develop knowledge & skills in

- daily stress management practices
- leisure activities that support healthy family connections
- healthy lifestyle choices like diet and exercise

Financial Planning

Our department/office provides resources & information for families to develop knowledge & skills in

- financial estate planning
- determining beneficiary information
- writing wills that specify how property will be distributed, who shall administer the officer's estate, who will care for any minor children and health care directives including; life-sustaining treatment directives, organ donation and funeral arrangements
- understanding of our departments deferred compensation plans
- the department/office retirement benefits

Mental Health Awareness and Response

Our department/office provides family directed information/resources about the following mental health topics:

- *atypical* responses to law enforcement stress
- the physiological patterns of shift work
- shift work stress and how it might look with a law enforcement family member
- warning signs for suicide
- developing skills to speak to a law enforcement family member about behaviors that are of concern
- knowledge of where to access resources regarding stress, withdrawal, anger, alcohol use, and parenting issues

Family Life

Our department/office provides resources & information for families to develop knowledge & skills in

- articulating the strengths and challenges of being in a law enforcement family
- typical emotional patterns for law enforcement personnel
- understanding stress patterns in law enforcement careers
- knowing how to access a mental health professional skilled in working with law enforcement families and couples
- identifying unique issues that impact child/youth health & well being in a law enforcement family
- discovering resources available about issues specific to belonging to a law enforcement family
- the access of resources specific to sustaining healthy and connected families

Connection and outreach

Our department/office

- facilitates family to family connections for our new law enforcement personnel and families in our department
- reaches out to department families when their officer has been involved in an accident or injury
- provides family member training and information related to 'family support in a critical incident situation'.
- makes family members aware of department/regional law enforcement training that is open to family members
- provides family focused information in regularly read union/department communication/mailings
- provides information on law enforcement family focused books and resources
- strengthens family connections through out the calendar year with a variety of family friendly functions & social events

MN Law Enforcement Family Support Network and Collaborative Partners. (2007). *Law Enforcement Family Competencies*. St. Paul, MN: Concordia University: Department of Criminal Justice.