

Building Healthy Law Enforcement Family Connections

Law Enforcement families come from unique backgrounds with a variety of capabilities and experiences. Developing critical law enforcement specific skills and knowledge will contribute to families having essential information and support their capacity for healthy family connections throughout a law enforcement career.

What law enforcement families need to know...

Making the Most of Your Law Enforcement Connection

- I understand the mission of public safety and the role and purpose of our law enforcement branch/office/department
- I understand our law enforcement organization and it's rules and regulations
- I know the ranks and administrative structure within my department/office
- I have a basic understanding of special units and offices within our law enforcement branch
- I understand the 'use of force' continuum
- I know and demonstrate the safe handling/unloading/securing of a weapon and other law enforcement tools
- My family members have been instructed gun safety and we have gun locks and secure storage for all law enforcement weapons & lethal tools

Critical Incidents

- I know my department/office/district MEDICAL critical incident procedure
- I have a written critical incident plan for my family (updated in the past 12 months)
- I have emergency child/pet/elder care plans for my family identified and written
- I know the department/office sequence of events during a critical incident
- I have the supervisor/bosses contact information on file in the event of a critical incident
- I know at least two key personal contacts with in our department/district/office that would be available to assist me or my family in the event of a critical incident involving our family member
- I have notified our children's school of preferred CI family procedures
- I have notified our family clergy of their role in any CI procedures

Health & Emergencies

- I have a basic understanding of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons of mass destruction, and I know where to find more information about potential threats.
- I have reviewed the general process of first responder medication distribution specific to my community and department.
- I understand the difference between isolation and quarantine, and when they may be used as tools to protect the public health.
- I can identify different types of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that may be used on the job.
- I know what to do if I/we suspect or demonstrate symptoms of hazardous exposures (i.e. mercury, fumes etc.).

Stress Management

- I know and utilize daily stress management practices
- We know and engage in leisure activities that allow us to make healthy connections with each other and our community members
- We demonstrate healthy lifestyle choices like diet and exercise

Financial Planning

- We have financial estate plans that are written and on file
- We have family beneficiary information on file
- We have a written will on file that specifies 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.
- We know and understand our departments deferred compensation plans.
- We understand our department's retirement benefits and are active in retirement planning.

Mental Health Awareness and Response

- I am aware of *atypical* responses to law enforcement stress
- I know & understand the way the body/brain reacts to shift work and can talk about how this might look with our law enforcement family member
- I know the warning signs for suicide
- I have the skills to speak to our law enforcement family member about behaviors that are of concern
- I know where to access resources regarding stress, withdrawal, anger, alcohol use, and parenting concerns

Family Life

- I can identify the strengths and challenges in being a law enforcement family
- I can identify typical emotional patterns for law enforcement personnel
- I understand stress patterns unique to law enforcement families
- I know how to access a mental health professional skilled in working with law enforcement families and couples
- I can identify unique issues that impact child/youth health and well being in a law enforcement family
- I have the resources I need to talk about issues specific to belonging to a law enforcement family
- I can identify resources specific to sustaining healthy and connected families
- I communicate regularly with other family members/friends & teachers about law enforcement issues that impact our family

Connection and outreach

- I/we reach out to new law enforcement personnel and families in our department
- I/we reach out to department families when their officer has been involved in an accident or injury
- I am aware of department/regional law enforcement training that is open to family members
- I regularly review union/department communication/mailings
- I review law enforcement magazines and publication for information relevant to families
- I am aware of law enforcement family focused books and resources
- I participate in law enforcement 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.