



The Law Enforcement Family Support Network is dedicated to providing educational resources for families. To that end, the editors have decided to include a firsthand account of a critical incident from a family member perspective – a youth perspective. The youth in this story agreed to be interviewed and share his story in the event it would help departments and families that find themselves in a similar situation. All information that could potentially identify the youth in the article has been intentionally omitted. The following is his story in his own words.

His story

On the day of the event, I was supposed to meet my dad at his over time job and have some lunch. It was early morning and I was sleeping at home when he woke me to say that he had to go on a special call out and we wouldn't be meeting as planned.

The next thing I remember is my phone ringing and waking me up – it was my dad calling to tell me that he had been injured – but was OK. He gave me a few medical details and told me to meet him at the hospital but to make sure I had someone else drive.

When my neighbor and I arrived at the hospital (the members of the family were not together when they learned of the injury – so all arrived at the hospital separately) we were met by a cop from the department. He escorted us to the emergency room to see my dad. My dad was in a hospital gown but otherwise was not 'cleaned up'. He kept telling me that his injuries might be hard to look at, but he would be O.K. My buddy and I hung out in the same room with my dad as other family members arrived. After about two hours I was able to relax a bit and understand that he really would be O.K.

One of the cops in the department took me and my buddy and sibling out for lunch. It was good to get away from the hospital for a little bit. My dad was hurt in the early morning and was ready to go home sometime in the late afternoon.

When we arrived home we were worried about 'retaliation' from the bad guys involved in the event. The department posted a marked squad in front of our house 24/7 for a week after the event. It made me feel safe. There was also a lot of media attention. The Chief called our house and told us when my dad's photo and story would be released to the media so we would be prepared.

Moving forward

I didn't want to go back to school after the event. I knew that all my friends and classmates would know about what happened, but I wanted to stay home and take care of my dad. I was worried about our family safety and his safety. At night I wanted the dog in the house with us. I asked my dad to keep his weapon loaded and by his bedside in case he needed it. We went through a safety check each night – locking windows, drawing draperies and checking doors.

I did return to school after taking one day off. My dad said that the routine would be good for me. I talked with my school resource officer and lots of the kids and staff told me they heard about what happened and were thinking about our family.

What worked what advice would you have for others in this situation?

- My parents invited all the cops who stopped over to come in to our house. They sat around and told stories and hung out. It really felt good to have them there.
- All the good wishes from the people in our community like the mayor, and people from my dad's old department.
- The police chaplain came to the house when my dad had to go downtown to give his statement. He took us out for a while – he was easy to be with and we focused on something other than dad and the injury for a while.
- The facebook page that someone made for my dad. Since he doesn't have one or know much about Facebook I would update him on postings. There were thousands from all over the world.
- My friends face booking me and telling me they heard and wishing me well.
- The staff and friends at school that sent a huge banner signed with all their names over to the house
- Having the school resource officer to talk with at school
- The cops that kept stopping by the second and third weeks after it happened
- The people that came by and involved me in conversations and stories
- The cops they assigned to us were easy to be with and could relate to us

What could have been done differently?

- Having the marked squad leave on the 8th day
- I might have talked with the employee assistance staff (EAP) if they would have showed up instead of calling

There were times after the event when my dad got emotional and I comforted him. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time. We spent a lot of time after the event just hanging out together, watching T.V and talking; being together just seemed to help.

It's been a while since my dad was hurt. I'm not as worried about our family being safe anymore. Even though it's behind us we've changed. We know we are not guaranteed every day – I think we are nicer and more thoughtful with each other. We see the good in situations.

LEFSN would like to sincerely thank this youth and his family for sharing their story. This family agreed that if one family could be helped or a burden eased by sharing their journey then it would be worth their time and effort.

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