

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Line of Duty Severe Injury/Death .....                           | 1  |
| I. Definitions .....   | 2  |
| A. Line of Duty Death .....                                      | 2  |
| B. Severe Injury .....   | 2  |
| C. Facility/Unit Employee Family Support (EFS) Coordinator ..... | 2  |
| D. Family Support Liaison .....                                  | 2  |
| E. Household/Family Members .....                                | 2  |
| II. Implementation .....   | 2  |
| A. Incident Notification .....                                   | 2  |
| B. Severe Injury/Death Notification .....                        | 5  |
| C. Family Support Liaisons .....                                 | 7  |
| III. Follow-Up Services .....                                    | 8  |
| A. Department Support During Legal Proceedings .....             | 8  |
| B. Memorial Services .....                                       | 8  |
| C. Absence from Work .....                                       | 8  |
| D. Light Duty .....  | 8  |
| IV. References .....   | 9  |
| V. Action .....  | 9  |
| Attachments .....  | 10 |

|  |  |                          |                                   |
|--|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Section-11 Human Resources</b>                                    | <b>OP-110501</b>                           | <b>Page: 1</b>           | <b>Effective Date: 09/19/2023</b> |
| <b>Line of Duty Severe Injury/Death</b>                              | <b>ACA Standards: 2CO1C25, 5-ACI-1C-24</b> |                          |                                   |
| <b>Steven Harpe, Director<br/>Oklahoma Department of Corrections</b> |  | <b>Signature on File</b> |                                   |

## Line of Duty Severe Injury/Death

The purpose of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) line of duty severe injury/death procedure is to provide direction for ODOC staff in responding to the needs of the family of an employee severely injured or killed in the line of duty. Any assurances made to the family during the incident will be kept or met to maintain their confidence and comfort during the incident.

Although this procedure provides direction and specifics as to the actions of the agency, the wishes of the family take precedence over any directive specified in this procedure. (2-CO-1C-25)

This procedure is intended to address severe injury or death in the line of duty; however, many provisions, including death notification and family assistance, may be applicable regardless of whether or not the death is duty related. The facility/unit head will determine if aspects of this procedure are to be applied in instances other than that of line of duty severe injury or death.

Staff with responsibilities regarding this procedure will not be available for assignment to their regular duties until relieved from responsibilities assigned in conjunction with this procedure.

Strict confidentiality of the injured/deceased employee's personal information will be maintained.

## I. Definitions

### A. Line of Duty Death

Any action, felonious or accidental, which claims the life of an employee who is performing work related functions, either while on or off-duty.

### B. Severe Injury

A physical or emotional injury that has the potential to cause prolonged disability or death of an employee, either by felonious or accidental means, during the course of performing their duties and responsibilities while employed by ODOC.

### C. Facility/Unit Employee Family Support (EFS) Coordinator

A facility/unit staff member, appointed by the facility/unit head, trained in line of duty severe injury/death procedures, designated to work in conjunction with the facility/unit head to coordinate all duties regarding the incident aimed at elimination of duplication of efforts, maintaining order, and ensuring that the process flows smoothly and for the benefit of the employee and/or family.

### D. Family Support Liaison

A facility/unit staff member who has been assigned liaison duties as specified in this procedure.

### E. Household/Family Members

Immediate family members of the deceased or severely injured employee. Immediate family is limited to spouse, children, parents, brothers, sisters, but may include step, grand, half, foster, or in-law relationships to the employee.

## II. Implementation

### A. Incident Notification

Upon notification of a line of duty severe injury or death, notification of the incident will occur as follows:

1. The supervisor in charge will ensure notification to the facility/unit head, duty officer, assistant facility head(s), and chief of security.
2. The facility/unit head will notify the affected administrator/chief administrator, who will notify the chief of Operations. If the

administrator/chief administrator cannot be reached, the facility/unit head will contact the chief of Operations.

3. The chief of Operations will notify the agency director.
4. As applicable, the agency director will ensure notification is made to the office of the Inspector General, the Governor, cabinet secretary of Safety and Security, Board of Corrections members, and affected legislators.

If applicable, relieving additional affected employee(s) from duty and removing the employee(s) from the scene of the incident to a secure location as soon as possible and in coordination with any jurisdictional authority involved in the incident or present at the scene of the incident;

- a. Communicating with the agency EFS Coordinator regarding the physical and emotional status of staff; and
- b. Requesting, through the agency EFS Coordinator, immediate professional intervention services, if requested by staff or as deemed appropriate.
- c. In conjunction with the facility/unit EFS Coordinator, schedule debriefing session(s) with affected employees. The debriefing process will be conducted in a timely manner after the incident in accordance with [OP-050108](#) entitled, "Use of Force Standards and Reportable Incidents."

1. Facility/Unit EFS Coordinator

The facility/unit head will work in conjunction with the facility/unit EFS Coordinator to coordinate all duties regarding the incident. The facility/unit EFS Coordinator will be responsible for:

- a. Immediate notification of staff selected by the facility/unit head to conduct the family severe injury/death notification. The facility/unit EFS Coordinator may serve as a member of the notification team.
- b. Obtaining the employee's contact information from the current "Data Summary Sheet" ([OP-110110](#), [Attachment A](#)); if the "Data Summary Sheet" ([OP-110110](#), [Attachment A](#)) is not available other sources from the personnel file will be utilized to obtain contact information.
- c. Making initial contact with the agency EFS Coordinator to exchange information and provide an initial briefing.

- d. In conjunction with the facility head, making assignment of duties and responsibilities to facility/unit staff as specified in this procedure. Staff members will be assigned as liaisons with specific duties as identified in "Family Support Liaison Duties" ([Attachment A](#), attached). One staff member may be assigned to multiple liaison duties as needed. More than one staff member may be assigned liaison duties as needed.
- e. Ensuring any equipment needed by family support liaisons is obtained and assigned. The facility/unit EFS Coordinator will ensure all assigned equipment is returned when no longer needed by the liaison.
- f. If requested by the employee's family, assisting with securing lodging reservations for extended family members.
- g. Assisting with the debriefing of any staff involved in the incident.
- h. Ensuring affected employees are provided information regarding the agency's employee assistance program and available counseling services/referrals, workers' compensation benefits, return to work regulations, and any other benefit information deemed appropriate; scheduling employee(s) for an interview with the agency EFS Coordinator as applicable. (2-CO-1C-25, 5-ACI-1C-24)
- i. Maintaining documentation pertaining to the incident.
- j. Ensuring the facility/unit head and all other applicable staff are kept informed of any information pertaining to the incident, to include liaison duties.
- k. Scheduling follow-up visits or phone calls with the primary family for at least two years following a line of duty death.

## 2. Agency EFS Coordinator

The agency EFS Coordinator is designated by the chief administrator of Human Resources and will be responsible for:

- a. Providing assistance to the facility/unit EFS Coordinators.
- b. Coordinating severe injury/line of duty death duties in cooperation with the facility/unit head and the facility/unit EFS Coordinator.
- c. Assisting facility/unit EFS Coordinators with obtaining training, which may include incident simulations/drills for facility/unit

staff in the grieving process, protocols, and techniques for notification.

- d. Facilitating the placement of any employee requiring a change in assigned duties and responsibilities through the chain of command.
- e. Providing and coordinating assistance for ongoing incidents and directing appropriate duties to address employee needs during the incident.
- f. Maintaining appropriate benefit related documentation.
- g. Gathering information regarding all department, association, and federal benefits available to the surviving family and ensuring the agency's full support pursuing those benefits. The agency EFS Coordinator will complete the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner and follow-through with the surviving family members to ensure benefits are being received.
- h. Visiting the family members to discuss benefits within one week of the funeral or when the family reaches the appropriate comfort level to discuss their benefits. The agency EFS Coordinator will inform the family that ODOC will make every effort to complete, submit and track all benefits for the deceased employee.
- i. Maintenance of a benefits checklist to ensure all appropriate benefits have been processed and received.
- j. Ensuring law enforcement retirement boards, state employee group health insurance and other state entities are informed of the employee's demise and provide any information needed to ensure continuing benefit coverage (as applicable) for family members.
- k. Providing the family with information regarding peer support and/or professional counseling services.

B. Severe Injury/Death Notification

- 1. The name of the injured/deceased employee will be released only by the agency public information officer and only after notification of the next of kin and after approval of the agency director.
- 2. Membership of the severe injury/death notification team may include, but not be limited to:

- a. Administrators/chief administrators;
  - b. Facility/unit head or highest ranking available staff member;
  - c. Chaplain;
  - d. Facility/unit EFS Coordinator;
  - e. Psychologist; or
  - f. Correctional officer, if applicable.
3. Notification will be made by at least two, but normally no more than four, team members.
4. Notification will be made no later than one hour after the incident or as quickly as possible. If the team members are not readily accessible, notification will be made by the highest ranking staff member available. The opportunity to transport the family to the hospital prior to the demise of the employee, or the risk of information being released on social media, is significantly more important than how the notification is delivered or by whom.
5. The next of kin will be identified by the contact information from the current "Data Summary Sheet", ([OP-110110](#), [Attachment A](#)) as provided by the facility/unit EFS Coordinator; if the "Data Summary Sheet", ([OP-110110](#), [Attachment A](#)), is not available, other sources from the personnel file will be utilized to obtain contact information.
6. Notification team members will be aware that next of kin will immediately realize that something is wrong upon arrival of the team. Team members will:
  - a. Ask to be admitted to the house. If at all possible, do not make a notification on the doorstep.
  - b. Gather everyone in the home, if possible, and ask them to sit down.
  - c. Inform the next of kin slowly and clearly of the information available about the incident.
  - d. It is important to use the injured/deceased employee's name during the notification.
  - e. Do not check the time on any device (watch, clock, mobile phone) during the conversation. The entire focus will be upon the family, the injured/deceased employee, and their welfare.

- f. Unless it is for the purpose of gathering information relevant to the conversation and the family is informed that it is for the purpose of doing so, do not check mobile phones for messages.
  - g. If the employee has already passed away, the information will be relayed immediately, with as many details in appropriate terms as possible. Do not give the family false hope.
    - (1) Do not use words that convey shock, such as “killed”, “died”, or “dead.” Use words meant to help the family cope with the shock, such as “passed away”, “did not survive”, or other comforting phrases.
    - (2) Be prepared for unexpected responses from the family such as hysteria, shock, physical or verbal attack, fainting, anger, etc.
  - h. The team will be reassuring to the family and make every effort to instill confidence that ODOC will support and assist them through each stage of the process.
- 7. If next of kin wishes to go to the hospital, they will be transported by agency vehicle. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves to the hospital.
  - a. A staff member will be assigned to remain at the residence for security and referral of the media.
  - b. Staff will be posted at the residence from the time of notification through eight hours after the conclusion of any memorial services.
  - c. Staff who made the initial notification to the family will remain with the family at the hospital until the medical/hospital liaison arrives.
- 8. Notification of next of kin out of the vicinity will be made with the assistance of local law enforcement and, if applicable, the nearest facility/unit head in the area closest to the residence of the next of kin.

C. Family Support Liaisons

The facility/unit EFS Coordinator will, in conjunction with the facility/unit head, assign staff members to serve as liaisons to coordinate or conduct specific duties as identified in “Family Support Liaison Duties,” ([Attachment A](#), attached).

1. All assigned staff will coordinate their actions through the facility/unit EFS Coordinator.
2. One staff member may be assigned to multiple liaison duties as needed. More than one staff member may be assigned liaison duties as needed.
3. In the event the employee has multiple families and/or an adversarial relationship exists with the next of kin, the facility/unit EFS Coordinator may assign separate liaisons for each family.

### III. Follow-Up Services

It is of paramount importance to help the family maintain a relationship with the agency if they desire.

#### A. Department Support During Legal Proceedings

As appropriate, the legal unit will work in conjunction with the facility/unit head to ensure family members are provided notification of known developments in any applicable legal proceedings. If possible, the information will be provided to the family prior to any press releases.

The Communications unit will coordinate information regarding any ODOC press releases with the family.

#### B. Memorial Services

National or local law enforcement agencies may extend invitations to family members to memorial services conducted by their agencies.

#### C. Absence from Work

It may be in the best interest of the employee(s) and ODOC for employee(s) involved in a line of duty severe injury or death incident to be off work for a period of time. All absences require an appropriate leave designation in accordance with [OP-110355](#) entitled "Procedures for Employee Attendance and Leave." The facility/unit head will consult with the central Human Resources unit to determine the appropriate leave program for post trauma absences.

#### D. Light Duty

Light duty assignments and details to special duty will be considered when employee(s) are released to return to work with physical or mental restrictions that are temporary in nature as a result of a trauma suffered from involvement in a critical incident. Such assignments will be in consultation with the central Human Resources unit and in accordance with [OP-110345](#), entitled "Workers' Compensation Insurance."



#### IV. References

Policy Statement P-110100 entitled "Uniform Personnel Standards"

OP-050108 entitled "Use of Force Standards and Reportable Incidents"

OP-110110 entitled "Enrollment Procedures for New Employees"

OP-110345 entitled "Workers' Compensation Insurance"

OP-110355 entitled "Procedures for Employee Attendance and Leave"

#### V. Action

The administrator of Human Resources is responsible for compliance with this procedure and for the annual review and revisions.

Any exceptions to this procedure will require prior written approval from the agency director.

This procedure is effective as indicated.

Replaced: OP-110501 entitled "Critical Incident Program" dated December 17, 2021

Distribution: Policy and Operations Manual  
Agency Website

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|----------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------|
| Section-11 Human Resources | OP-110501 | Page: 10 | Effective Date: 09/19/2023 |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------|

| <u>Attachments</u>           | <u>Title</u>                    | <u>Location</u>           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <a href="#">Attachment A</a> | "Family Support Liaison Duties" | Attached                  |
| <a href="#">Attachment A</a> | "Data Summary Sheet"            | <a href="#">OP-110110</a> |