

Chaplaincy and LODD

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Concerns of Police Survivors

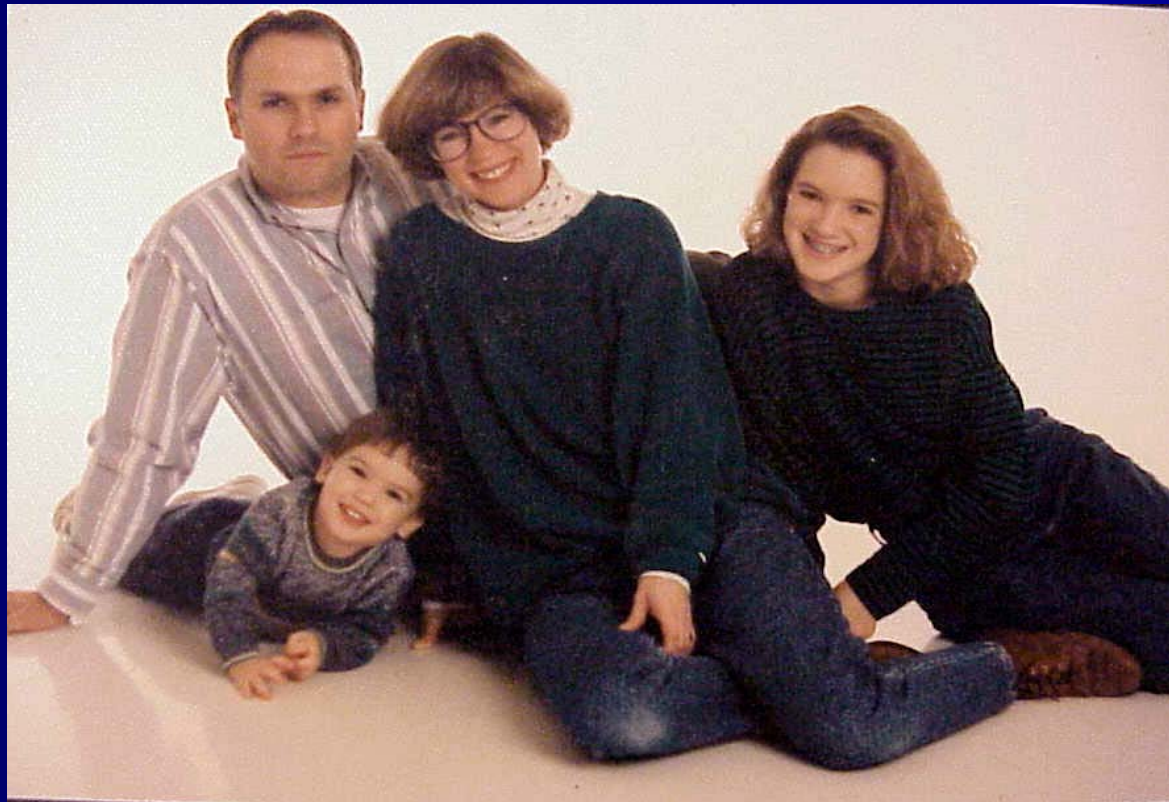
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Chaplain's Role

- Support to Officers / Families
- Confidentiality
- Death Notification
- Departmental / Agency debriefing
- CISM Intervention
- Response / Support person
 - to department, to the family, to the community, at the hospital, at the scene

Importance of SOP

Develop in-depth general order addressing this issue

Reacting chaotically to tragedy causes ***severe emotional secondary injuries***

If no general orders for line of duty death or injury, ***"How would I want my family treated?"***

Line of Duty Death Policy

SOP according to individual agency

- Family Liaison Officer
- Hospital Liaison Officer
- Department Liaison Officer
- Funeral
- PIO
- Chaplain
- Benefits coordinator
- Aftercare

Chaplain's Role

- Does your agency have a formal policy for an official chaplain's role?
- Policy concerning chaplain's role should entail:
 - Chaplain's role in notification to significant survivors
 - Chaplain's participation in CISM intervention
 - Presence
 - Availability
 - Confidentiality

Chaplain's Role

As necessary:

- Educate all personnel regarding the issues and effective responses to the critical incident
- When permitted or invited, pray with the spiritually significant leader of the family or pray with the survivors

Chaplain's Role

- Be aware of the particular tenets and practices of the surviving family members or significant others
- If welcome, provide presence during the funeral rituals
- LOD injury—if welcome, visit with the injured officer(s)



"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" Psalm 23

Survivors Defined

- Survivors
 - Spouses
 - Children
 - Parents
 - Siblings
 - Significant Others
 - Co-workers
 - Chaplains



Survivor's Level of Distress

A survivor's level of distress is affected by the police department/fire department's response to the tragedy.

(Vicarious victimization)

Survivor's Level of Distress

Elements of the department's response that should be considered include:

- Way survivors are notified
- ◆ Emotional support provided by the department
- ◆ Information the department gives regarding insurance and benefits

Care of the Family



The way the department handles the crisis of a line-of-duty death may actually increase the level of trauma experienced by the family

Survivors of LODD

How these elements
are handled has
an influence on
whether or not
the survivor will
develop a clinical
psychological
disorder such as
PTSD



PTS Symptoms/Family

- Feelings of hostility
- Estrangement from others
- Sleep disorders
- Flashbacks
- Guilt about surviving
- Difficulty concentrating
- Intrusive thoughts

Post Traumatic Stress

These feelings are typical of the intense, long-lasting reactions experienced by the majority of adult survivors

These feelings are *normal*

The Survivors

- 59% with PTS symptoms
- Fewer number of years married the more devastating the sense of loss
- Intense grief experienced up to 5 years (or longer)
- No difference between accidental or felonious death
- 67% pay for funeral expenses out of their own pockets

Care of Personnel

Personnel

- The most stressful occurrence in an emergency service career is the loss of a coworker.
- 70% of officers will leave law enforcement within five years if administrators do not effectively deal with issues of grief and anger among their officers.

Care of Personnel

- There should be mandatory assistance for all involved officers after a critical incident
- Line of duty death of a coworker can bring the officer's defense system tumbling down
- *Officers will need to process the incident, or it will process them*

Normal Grief Reactions

- Acute
 - Numb, flat feeling
 - Reluctance to finish projects or meet new people
 - Tendency to sigh frequently
 - Tightness in the throat
 - Complete lack of energy
 - Empty feeling in one's stomach even after eating
 - Tremendous guilt that they were responsible for the death - even if irrational

Normal Grief Reactions

- Acute (continued....)
 - Anger and coldness to others
 - Especially to family and friends trying to give support and sympathy
 - Inability to carry on normal conversations
 - Take on many characteristics of the deceased's behavior

Normal Grief Reactions

■ Chronic

- Memories
- Loss of hopes and dreams
- New events trigger old losses
- Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries
- Reluctance to start new relationships

Care of Personnel/Families

- How long does it last?
 - Depends on the manner of death
 - The baggage they are carrying
 - Relationship to the deceased

Typically 5 years for a line of duty death

Emergency Service personnel have a different,
unique grieving process