

	<b>Houston Independent School District Police Department Directives</b>	<b>DIRECTIVE: 420-008</b>
		<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: April 17, 2021</b>
	<b>SUBJECT: Line of Duty Death and Ceremonies</b>	<b>REVISED DATE: Date January 14, 2022</b>

## **POLICY**

The Houston Independent School District Police Department's policy is to assist the immediate family of any active Houston ISD police officer who dies in the line of duty or has sustained life-threatening injuries. This policy is designed to prepare this agency in the event of an active-duty officer's death in the line of duty and direct the agency to provide proper support and emotional care for the deceased officer's family.

This directive applies to all employees.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Beneficiary:** Those designated by the officer as recipients of specific death benefits.

**Benefits:** Financial payments made to the family.

**Casket watch:** A mandatory requirement for a line of duty death that requires the constant guarding of the deceased's remains once the body has been prepared for viewing. This honor is performed on a 24-hour basis.

**Color guard:** A contingent of department members assigned to carry the American flag and Texas state flag flanked by two riflemen.

**Death of another law enforcement agency member:** A member of an agency involved in the enforcement of criminal laws who dies while taking any action the member is authorized or obligated to perform by law.

**Death not in the line of duty:** A department member actively employed or in an authorized volunteer service who suffers non-police-related fatality or dies while off duty.

**Department liaison officer:** The department liaison officer will serve as a facilitator between the family and the law enforcement agency. This individual will typically be a commanding officer to expedite deploying departmental resources and delegating assignments. This officer will work closely with the funeral liaison officer to ensure that the family's needs and requests are fulfilled.

**Family Liaison Officer:** An officer appointed to serve as the department's representative and official contact person for all the deceased member's family matters. The Family Liaison Officer does not necessarily need to be of a supervisory rank. This employee should be a close friend of the family and work closely with the department liaison officer. They will also serve as a long-term liaison and support capacity for the surviving family.

**Honor Guard:** A contingent of department members tasked to render appropriate military honors during the departmental funeral, i.e., saluting the casket at the funeral site and the burial location.

**Hospital Liaison Officer:** Acts as an information liaison for medical personnel to the officer's family and fellow police officers. The hospital liaison officer is an individual who has a rapport with emergency department personnel and practices.

**Immediate/surviving family:** Immediate family members of the deceased officer include spouse, children, parents, siblings, fiancée, and significant other.

**Line of duty death:** An active-duty officer's death by felonious or accidental means while performing police functions while on duty or off duty.

**Line of duty injury or illness:** For this policy, a duty injury or illness shall be an injury or systemic illness serious enough for a physician to order hospitalization or time away from the department for an indefinite period.

**Mourning band:** A black cloth band is worn on the badge to designate mourning by department members.

**Mourning period:** The period designated by the Chief of Police where all members and the county flags wear the mourning band is flown at half-staff. The traditional mourning period for a line of duty death is generally until the completion of the committal service.

**Retired member:** Any sworn or non-sworn member who is in good standing and fully separated through retirement from the department and is eligible to begin receiving district pension benefits; or any former sworn or non-sworn member who is receiving a district disability pension and completed at least five years of active duty; or any former Chief of Police.

**Pallbearers:** Individuals selected to carry the casket of the deceased member. Pallbearers need not be strictly departmental members. Civilians or a combination of members and civilians can perform this function. However, all pallbearers should be dressed in similar attire, with the exception of classified officers. The department will respect the wishes of the family when selecting pallbearers.

## **NOTIFICATION OF DEATH OR LIFE-THREATENING INJURY**

The following procedures should be adhered to in line-of-duty deaths and critically injured officers with poor survival prognoses. These procedures should be followed whenever possible with the understanding that the family's wishes take precedence over the agency's desires. Officers providing services and assistance to family members and survivors shall take all possible measures to accommodate their needs, wishes, and desires. Still, they should not make promises to family members that they are not sure can be met.

If the officer completes a confidential form, that form will be stored in a place designated by the Chief of Police or their designee to ensure confidentiality of the

information contained on the form. This form contains information that will assist the notification team in making notifications as directed. Completion of this form is voluntary.

Notification must always be made in person and never alone for immediate family or survivors in the immediate area. Notification will always be made by two or more persons designated by the Chief of Police or their designee. The following individuals may act as the notification team for the immediate family:

- a) The Chief of Police or their designee
- b) The commanding officer of the deceased
- c) Another officer or supervisor close to the deceased and their family
- d) Chaplain

The deceased officer's name shall not be released to the media or other parties before immediate family living in the area are notified. Communication of information concerning the officer and the incident shall, whenever possible, be restricted to the telephone to avoid interception by the media or others. Should the media obtain the officer's name prematurely, the ranking officer should request all information be withheld until the immediate family's proper notification can be made.

If there is knowledge of an existing medical problem with the immediate family member or survivor, medical personnel should be requested to stand by. Death notification should not be made on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted into the house. Inform family members slowly and clearly of the information available. If specific information about the incident is known, the notification officer should relay as much information as possible to the family. The officer's name should be used during the notification. If the officer has died, relay that information. Never give the family a false sense of hope. Notification of immediate family should be made as soon as possible. It is highly recommended the family not drive themselves to the hospital.

For immediate family other than the deceased officer's spouse and parents who live beyond the Houston Independent School District area, the notification team will ensure a teletype message is sent to the appropriate jurisdiction requesting that they contact the designated Houston ISD department liaison phone.

The Houston ISD PD liaison should request that a personal notification be conducted unless exigent circumstances exist. The notification officer/team may choose to call the other jurisdictions by telephone in addition to the teletype. If possible, the deceased or severely injured officer's parents should also be afforded a personal notification courtesy.

## **ASSISTING WITH FAMILY AT THE HOSPITAL**

Whenever possible, a command staff member designated by the Chief of Police or their designee shall join the family at the hospital to emphasize the agency's support.

The first official other than the Chief of Police to arrive at the hospital becomes the hospital liaison officer. The hospital liaison officer shall be responsible for

coordinating the arrival of immediate family or survivors, departmental personnel, the media, and others and assume the following responsibilities:

- a) Arrange waiting facilities for immediate family and survivors and a press staging area. The desires of the immediate family or survivors should be followed regarding their accessibility to other officers and friends.
- b) Ensure medical personnel provides pertinent medical information on the officer's condition to the family before any other parties.
- c) Assist family members in accordance with their desires in gaining access to the injured or deceased officer.
- d) Provide hospital personnel with all the necessary information on billing for medical services. The liaison officer should ensure that all medical bills are directed to the appropriate departmental authority and not forwarded to the officer's family or survivors.
- e) Arrange transportation for the family and other survivors upon departure from the hospital if needed.
- f) Ensure that all immediate family members are provided with the appropriate assistance at the hospital.
- g) If injuries to the officer are likely to be fatal and it is possible for the family to visit their officer before death, they should be afforded the opportunity. There is a definite need to touch and hold the body while there is still life, and death can be comforting to the family.

## **ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED OFFICERS**

Officers on the scene or officers who arrived after an officer was critically injured or killed should be relieved as soon as possible. This will include any dispatcher involved in the incident. Police employees who may have been emotionally affected by another officer's severe injury or death should be referred to a counseling center or employee assistance program for assistance.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY DURING A WAKE OR FUNERAL**

The Chief of Police or their designee will meet with the officer's family at their home to determine their wishes regarding departmental participation or assistance in preparing the funeral or services. All possible assistance will be offered.

With the family's approval, the Chief of Police or their designee can appoint a Family Liaison Officer to work closely with the department liaison officer.

The Chief of Police or their designee will assign a department liaison officer.

This position is usually assigned to a commander to effectively coordinate the department's resources. The department liaison officer will have the authority to form a committee and delegate responsibilities as needed.

- a) Work closely with the family to ensure that the family's needs are fulfilled.
- b) Meet with the following person to coordinate funeral activities if the family desires departmental involvement:

1. Chief of Police and command staff members
  2. Funeral director
  3. Family priest or minister
  4. Cemetery director
  5. Honor guard
- c) Direct the funeral activities of the department and visiting agencies according to the wishes of the family.
  - d) Obtain an American flag. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief of Police, notify the Chief of Police.
  - e) If the family desires a burial in uniform, select an officer to obtain a uniform and all accouterments (except weapons) and deliver them to the funeral home.
  - f) If the family desires, assign members for usher and pallbearer duty.
  - g) Arrange for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family.
  - h) Brief the Chief of Police and staff concerning all funeral arrangements.
  - i) Ensure that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged during the funeral procession.
  - j) Coordinate traffic management with other jurisdictions.
  - k) Assign officer(s) to remain at the family home during the viewing and funeral.
  - l) Arrange for close patrol checks of the survivors' homes for several weeks following the funeral. This service is necessary since the survivors may be spending much time away from home dealing with family matters.
  - m) Assist the family gather and coordinating information regarding benefits to them.

### **CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE IMMEDIATELY FAMILY**

The Family Liaison Officer will also act as a long-term liaison with the surviving family. The Family Liaison Officer ensures close contact between the department and the survivors and that their needs are met for as long as they feel support.

Members of the department are encouraged to keep in touch with the family. Close friends, co-workers, and officials should periodically visit the home if the family desires these contacts. Increased contact and additional support during the holidays should be considered.

Survivors should continue to be invited to departmental activities or functions to ensure continued contact.

### **RESPONSE TO LIFE-THREATENING INJURY AND DEATH NOT IN THE LINE OF DUTY**

The department will offer the following for the immediate family:

- a) Personal notification of family members.
- b) Transportation to the hospital or other location(s) for family members.
- c) The family Liaison Officer will be available to the family as needed or requested.

- d) Departmental honors will be rendered with the approval of the Chief of Police.

For survivor benefits, refer to the benefits information posted on the concerns of police survivors, inc. Web page at [www.nationalcops.org/forms.htm](http://www.nationalcops.org/forms.htm).

## **FUNERAL SERVICES**

### **Full Police Honors**

Full police honors are rendered for a sworn officer killed while honorably performing in the line of duty or dies later due to that line of duty injury. For this directive, "under honorable conditions" envisions a status wherein the officer's service before their death has been of good and respectable reputation, and the officer was not under a cloud of criminal prosecution at the time of death. The circumstances of the death should be free of any immediate questionable actions or motives by the officer.

Personnel are sworn officers for this directive's purposes from the time they are sworn in (not hire date) until they leave the active sworn service of the HISD Police Department. Any or all the following full police honors may be rendered upon request of the family and approval of the Chief of Police:

- a) All flags at police facilities will be flown at half-staff, from the time of the officer's death, until immediately following the committal service.
- b) All department members with badges will cover the badge with a department-approved mourning band horizontally across the middle, from the day of death until the completion of the committal service. Departmental personnel without a badge should place a black mourning band across the middle of their department-issued identification/access card until immediately following the committal service.
- c) Department honor guards will be placed at the casket when lying in state and viewing. Honor guards will remain at the funeral and be removed after the family is seated.
- d) A department dress uniform would be provided for the burial of the deceased if the deceased were eligible to wear a uniform. The badge and other necessary items will be removed and returned to the department before burial.
- e) A detail to serve as uniform pallbearers and all dressed in the same dress uniform. (This may or may not be the department honor guard)
- f) The United States or Texas flag drape the casket.
- g) Color guards may present the colors at the service, the burial, or both depending on the circumstances. (Only for full police honors)
- h) The department honor guard will conduct flag-folding ceremonies.
- i) The flag will be presented to the designated family member by the Chief of Police or his designee. Additional flags may be presented to other immediate family members on approval of the Chief of Police. Additional flags will be pre-folded and passed over the casket before a presentation.
- j) A 21-gun salute may be performed by the department honor guard (only for full police honors)

- k) "Taps" may be played at the committal service (or other appropriate music).
- l) Bagpipes may also be used as appropriate in the service.
- m) "Special assignment" status would include assisting the family during travel out of the area.
- n) A Walk-through of all police personnel in attendance may be used to pay tribute to the deceased officer. If used, the Honor Guard Coordinator and the department liaison officer will coordinate the walk-through and have all attendees line up single file by department, if possible. All departmental honor guards should be at the front of the formation. The formation will walk past the single casket file, with each officer pausing briefly to pay tribute. The formation will exit the church and line up between the hearse and the door the casket will exit from, with honor guard units on the front row(s).
- o) The Honor Guard Coordinator will call the detail to attention and then "Present Arms" as the casket and immediate family pass by. The coordinator will command "order arms" and dismiss the detail at the appropriate time. (only for full police honors)

## **DEPARTMENTAL HONORS**

Departmental honors are the rendering of honors at the funerals of active sworn members who die under honorable conditions off duty, or on duty in a non-line of duty circumstance, or honorably retired sworn members. Any or all departmental honors may be rendered, upon request of the family and approval of the Chief of Police:

- a) All honors listed for full police honors may be used except those expressly set aside for full police honors only.
- b) A United States flag, if the deceased was an honorably discharged United States veteran or a currently serving Houston ISD officer, or otherwise a Texas flag may be used to drape the casket.
- c) The honor guard may conduct a flag folding ceremony.
- d) The flag may be presented to the family by the Chief of Police or designee. Additional flags may be presented to other immediate family members on approval of the Chief of Police. Additional flags will be pre-folded and passed over the casket before the presentation.
- e) Marked police vehicles may be used for the procession within a reasonable distance. Marked vehicles will obey all traffic laws during procession unless directed otherwise by an escort. The chief must approve all vehicle use of police or designee.
- f) Former chiefs of police may be afforded additional honors as approved by the Chief of Police.

## **DEPARTMENTAL HONORS FOR NON-SWORN MEMBERS**

- a) Department honors for non-sworn members render honors at funerals non-sworn active members of the department who died on or off duty. It is also for funerals of honorably retired non-sworn members. Any or all departmental honors for non-sworn members may be rendered, upon request of the family and approval of the Chief of Police:

- b) All department members attending the funeral services for deceased non-sworn members will cover their badges or identification/access cards with a department-approved mourning band during the funeral service and until immediately following the committal service.
- c) If requested by the family, a departmental uniform will be provided for the deceased's burial if the deceased was eligible to wear a uniform and a dress uniform. The badge and other necessary items will be removed and returned to the department before burial.
- d) Bagpipes may be used during the service if available.
- e) A United States flag, if the deceased was an honorably discharged United States veteran, or otherwise a Texas flag may be used to drape the casket.
- f) A flag folding ceremony may be conducted by appropriate personnel if available.
- g) The flag may be presented to the designated family member by the Chief of Police or department representative. Additional flags may be presented to other immediate family members on approval of the Chief of Police. Additional flags will be pre-folded and passed over the casket before the presentation.
- h) Honor guards at the casket when lying in state before the service. Honor guards will be removed after the family is seated. Honor guards will be department members who volunteer to provide this honor to the deceased. It may include non-sworn uniform personnel.
- i) Police vehicles may not be used as funeral escort vehicles. Marked police vehicles may be used for the procession within a reasonable distance. Marked vehicles will obey all traffic laws during procession unless directed otherwise by an escort. The chief or designee must approve all vehicle use.

## **CEREMONIAL HONORS**

Ceremonial honors are the rendering of honors on, but not limited to, the following occasions:

- a) The funeral of a member of another law enforcement agency, where the other law enforcement agency employee took place in the line of duty and the death occurred in Houston ISD, and the funeral or committal service will occur in Houston.
- b) It is conceivable that full police honors may be rendered with the Chief of Police's approval depending on the circumstances. We will assist the outside agency as that agency will have primary responsibility for the arrangements.
- c) The funeral of a person the department wishes to honor could include former Houston ISD officers who left the department in good standing but did not retire from Houston ISD, as defined in this policy.
- d) As approved by the Chief of Police:
- e) A detail to serve as uniform pallbearers and all dressed in the same dress uniform.
- f) Volunteer uniform personnel may stand guard at the casket before the funeral service.



- g) All department members will cover their badges with an approved mourning band placed horizontally across the middle from death until after the committal service. Department personnel without a badge should place a black mourning band across the middle of their department-issued identification/access card until the completion of the committal service.
- h) Bagpipes may be used during the service if available.
- i) If used, presentation flags will be pre-folded and presented to family members by a department representative.
- j) All ceremonial honors must have prior approval from the Chief of Police.

## **OFFICIAL BURIAL FLAGS**

The United States flag or the Texas flag is the only flag permitted to drape the casket where the department is rendering full department honors or department honors. This does not limit the pall sometimes used by various churches, but nothing may cover the flag. The flag will be removed before the pall covers the casket.

## **DEPARTMENTAL MEMBER FUNERALS OUTSIDE THE AREA**

When the funeral service is to be outside the Houston ISD area, a memorial service may be held in the immediate area with appropriate honors up to the time of the departure of the body. The Chief of Police and captain of the deceased employee will determine who may attend as department representatives for funeral services outside the area.

An honor guard may be approved for a funeral up to 150 miles from Houston ISD. The Chief of Police or their designee may authorize the honor guard's use in distances greater than 150 miles.

## **POLICE OFFICER FUNERALS – OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

In cases where officers from this department wish to represent Houston ISD at the funeral of an officer of another agency within 150 miles of Houston ISD, the department may provide a vehicle for the trip depending on circumstances. Coordination, and approval, for the trip must be approved by the Chief of Police or designee.

Off-duty personnel who desire to attend should do so on their own time. On-duty personnel attendance will be influenced by the need to maintain appropriate personnel to handle service calls. The department may furnish vehicle expenses and personnel designated on special assignment for the funeral.

## **FUNERALS OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF EMPLOYEES**

Department employees may attend "police family members" funerals, but it will be their own time and expense. Time off duty needs to be approved by the appropriate chain of command. Circumstances may permit one department vehicle to be used. The use of a department vehicle would require the approval of a commander. Circumstances that might be approved could include:

- a) If the deceased had been a former or retired law enforcement officer from an agency other than Houston ISD; or
- b) If the deceased had died while attempting to stop a violent criminal act being committed on a third party in Houston ISD; or
- c) Other circumstances approved by a commander or the Chief of Police.

## **DEATH UNDER LESS THAN HONORABLE CONDITIONS**

In the cases of a death of any person covered by this policy, where the death is under less than honorable conditions, the department is under no obligation to furnish or provide any assistance or honors for the service or any expenses for any officer desiring attend the services.

If a question arises, the Chief of Police will determine whether the death was under less than honorable conditions and make the final determination for the type of funeral honors to be given and the use of all department assets and personnel.

## **MOURNING BAND PROTOCOL**

The Houston ISD police department's approved mourning band is a solid black band that will fit tightly around the departmental badge. Mourning bands shall be worn on the departmental badge only in the following circumstances:

- a) Upon the line of duty of an active Houston ISD police officer. The mourning band should be worn thirty days from the day of death. Upon committal, the mourning band will be removed.
- b) Upon the line of duty death of a law enforcement officer from a neighboring jurisdiction. The mourning band will be worn from the date of death and removed after the day of burial.
- c) National Peace Officers Memorial Day (May 15th) every year.
- d) Any day designated to honor officers of the Houston ISD police department who have died in the line of duty.
- e) During any line of duty, memorials, such as a wall or plaque dedications.
- f) At the direction of the Chief of Police or their designee when special circumstances dictate that the department displays official mourning.

## **MOURNING BAND PLACEMENT**

For round, square, and "shield" type badges, the mourning band should be on the badge and centered halfway between the badge's top and bottom. The mourning band should never cover the badge number. Civilian employees will be authorized to wear a mourning band across the middle of their department-issued identification/access card upon the death of an officer of the department or at the discretion of the Chief of Police or their designee.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ALL FUNERALS**

Houston ISD personnel will be expected to wear their class "A" dress uniforms to funerals on duty. If issued uniforms, off-duty personnel are encouraged to wear the dress uniform for the family to identify Houston ISD police personnel present at the funeral. Usually, personnel attending will be voluntary. Attendance on duty will be

influenced by the need to maintain appropriate duty personnel to handle normal service requests.

"Special Assignment" status is afforded to the department members who have been designated specific responsibilities related to the funeral and deceased officer's family when reasonably needed to perform their duties. During off-duty hours, these officers will act as concerned friends and helpers to the family and are expected to serve without compensation except for any reasonable, actual expenses incurred, which will be reimbursed.

In the event of any question, the Chief of Police makes the final determination for the type of funeral honors to be given and the use of all department assets and personnel.

Approved By

  
Pedro Lopez Jr., Chief of Police