

**COUNTY OF MONROE  
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK**

<b>GENERAL ORDER MULTI BUREAU</b>	<b>DATE OF ISSUE July 9, 2024</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE July 9, 2024</b>	<b>NO. 108-24</b>
<b>SUBJECT: GENERAL ORDER In-Person Death &amp; Major Incident Notifications</b>		<b>DISTRIBUTION All Personnel</b>	<b>AMENDS</b>
<b>REFERENCE: NYSLEAP 43.7, MPTC IN-PERSON DEATH NOTIFICATIONS MODEL POLICY. NYSSA (JAIL) 114</b>			<b>RESCINDS NEW</b>

**Purpose:** To provide the policy and guidelines for delivering a death or major incident notification.

**Policy:** When it's determined MCSO is responsible for making a death notification, Sheriff's Office personnel assigned will adhere to policies and procedures for planning, notification, and post notification processes including but not limited to, the identification of the deceased individual, the collection of accurate information regarding the deceased individual, the identification of the deceased individual's next-of-kin to be notified and the timely delivery of the notification. Line of Duty Death Protocols, refer to MBGO-092.

**I. Definitions**

**Decedent** – The person(s) that has/have died and is the subject of the in-person death notification.

**Family Assistance Center (FAC)** – A secure facility established following a mass casualty incident to provide information to next of kin about missing or unaccounted persons and the deceased, and to provide services for victims and their loved ones.

**Next-of-Kin (NOK)** – The closest relative of the decedent (e.g., spouse, parents, siblings, significant others, adult children).

**Notification Team** – Ideally, a team of two (2) uniformed Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) who have experience in delivering in-person death notifications and have received training in the same. In special circumstances, the second member may be a mental health or medical professional, victim's advocate, chaplain, social worker or other individual deemed an appropriate team member. The team is responsible for ensuring both a timely positive identification has been made of the decedent and notification of the death to the appropriate family member(s) is made in addition to any necessary follow-up support.

**II. In-Person Notification Procedures**

**A. Planning the in-person death notification**

1. Gather and verify essential information using a secure means of communication (i.e., landlines, cell phones) to guard against the premature release of information to unauthorized persons.
  - a. Identification of decedent - If the Medical Examiner (ME) responds, takes possession of the decedent, and/or is conducting an investigation into the

death, identification of the decedent must be confirmed with the ME's office prior to making the notification.

- b. The following are identifiers to ensure the decedent has been positively identified which may include but not be limited to:
  - i. Fingerprints, DNA, and dental records
  - ii. Identification documents or other items found on the decedent
  - iii. Identification by witnesses
- c. Identify details of decedent – details and circumstances of the death must be known to deliver a proper death notification statement which may include but not limited to:
  - i. Location of Death
  - ii. When death occurred
  - iii. How death occurred
  - iv. Was it the result of a criminal act?
  - v. Was an arrest made or suspect identified?
- d. Identify the decedents' legal next-of-kin
  - i. Identify with respect to relationship to the decedent. Identification of Next-of Kin should be conducted as quickly as possible beginning with spouse or domestic partner, and if necessary, followed by adult child, parent, adult sibling, and other relatives until an appropriate next-of-kin is identified.
  - ii. Identify, when possible given, any special or unique circumstances that may impact the delivery of the notification and affect the next-of-kin who will be receiving the notification. This may include ascertaining whether survivors are older adults, have a disability, visually impaired, hard of hearing, have medical concerns and/or existence of language barriers

## 2. Notification Team

- a. Team member structure, Police Bureau
  - i. Ideally, the two (2) members will be two (2) law enforcement officers with at least one member experienced in delivering death notifications.
  - ii. One member will be the primary contact to deliver the notification.
  - iii. The second member will provide support and monitor the next-of-kin and surroundings.

- b. Team member structure, Jail Bureau
  - i. When delivering a notification to an Incarcerated Individual within the security of the jail, the two (2) members will be a sworn staff member with a mental health or medical personnel, with at least one member experienced in delivering death notifications.
  - ii. When delivering a notification to someone outside the security of the jail, the two (2) members will be two (2) law enforcement officers with at least one member experienced in delivering death notifications.
  - iii. One member will be the primary contact to deliver the notification.
  - iv. The second member will provide support and monitor the next-of-kin and/or surroundings.

**B. Preparing the Notification**

- 1. Notification team will:
  - a. Verify and confirm information gathered about decedent and next-of-kin.
  - b. Take careful consideration regarding releasing certain details if the death is part of a criminal investigation.
  - c. Prepare to explain to the next-of-kin why certain details are being withheld at the time of the notification to reduce additional frustration and grief.
  - d. If possible, identify any resources that will assist in tailoring the delivery of the notification giving attention to any known special considerations (see section II; language barriers, young children, persons with disabilities).
- 2. When next-of-kin is located out of state or otherwise an impractical distance
  - a. Communicate with local law enforcement in the vicinity of the next-of-kin so that they can make the in-person notification.
  - b. A teletype will be provided to them that will include but not limited to:
    - i. Full name, date of birth, and other identifies of the decedent
    - ii. Full name and address of the next-of-kin to be notified
    - iii. A synopsis of the circumstances surrounding the decedent's death
    - iv. The name, address, and telephone number of the location where the decedent is located.
    - v. Contact information of the investigating deputy and/or MCSO

personnel and any further instructions

- c. Verify with the notifying agency that the notification has been made.
- d. Contact the proper foreign embassy when the decedent and their family is not a resident of the United States.
- e. Follow the guidelines within this policy to conduct an in-person death notification on behalf of an outside requesting agency.

C. Delivering the Death Notification

1. The death notification shall always be made in-person to the decedent's next-of-kin as soon as possible (ASAP) following the identification of the decedent. If closest next-of-kin is unavailable or there is reason to believe there will be considerable delay in conducting an in-person death notification within such timeframe, the following steps shall be taken:
  - a. Document the failure or delay
  - b. Notify a supervisor
  - c. Evaluate time elapsed and the need to notify the next closest next-of-kin
  - d. Conduct notification as soon as practicable
  - e. Pass along to next shift assigned
2. Personal items of the decedent shall not be delivered to the next-of-kin at the time of the death notification.
3. Making the Notification will be done by a Lieutenant or Sergeant who is experienced in having given notifications.
4. Give the next-of-kin contact information to the Medical Examiner's Office for further necessary information regarding the decedent.
5. Do not leave the next-of-kin, especially a lone survivor, unattended, unless you are reasonably confident they have adequate personal control and/or support to take care of themselves and those whom they may be responsible for.
6. Only if the incident prompting the death notification was a crime, information can be provided regarding the availability of services and programs available through the NYS Office of Victim Services.

D. Delivering the Major Incident Notification

A major incident involves a result of a fatal or life-threatening serious injury or illness to any of the individuals involved in the incident. The delivery of information to the next-of-kin of an individual who has sustained a life-threatening injury or illness will be the same as outlined in a death notification. The only other component to be mindful of is the need for an expeditious notification due to the potential circumstances of the serious injury resulting in death.

### III. Special Considerations

#### A. Children

Death notifications shall not be made directly to a child.

#### B. Persons with disabilities or older adults

1. For persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, be prepared to communicate via writing, speech (lip) reading or American Sign Language.
2. Consider having another family member or support staff person who knows the individual well be present for the notification.

#### C. Language Barriers

1. Utilize local language services if there is an existence of a language barrier that will impede the delivery of the notification.
2. Never use a child to translate the death notification to the next-of-kin.

#### D. Mass Casualty Events

1. Coordination in managing the death notifications among responding law enforcement agencies and the local coroner/medical examiner's office is essential and treated as a priority. Where multiple law enforcement agencies are involved, the lead agency in managing the death notification process must be clearly designated to include the responsibility of the establishment, implementation, and any necessary oversight of a Family Assistance Center.
2. Determination will be made with law enforcement partners if a private area within a family assistance center should be used to make the death notifications, where practicable.
3. Notifications should be done as quickly as possible following positive victim identification. Next-of-kin are frequently aware from social media, television coverage, and communications from survivors and witnesses that their loved ones are potential casualties.
  - a. When practicable, designate one Notification Team per family, with as many Notification Teams as necessary based on the circumstances.
  - b. If appropriate, make notifications on a rolling basis to each family as the identity of each victim becomes verified rather than delivering the notifications only after all victims have been identified.
4. Once the notification is delivered, you may have to explain the investigative and identification process to the next-of-kin, particularly if it may result in a delay in releasing the body of the decedent. Make sure that the next-of-kin knows where to obtain follow-up information on when and how the decedent will be released.
5. Alert next-of-kin that there may be a press conference or other public release of information by authorities.

E. Workplace/business Notifications

1. Locate the next-of-kin's manager or supervisor upon arrival the workplace requesting to meet with the employee regarding a family emergency. Do not divulge additional information.
2. Request a private room or space.
3. After delivering the death notification, offer to notify the manager or supervisor regarding the notification, if preferred by the next-of-kin. Allow the next-of-kin to determine what information is to be shared with their manager or supervisor.

F. Criminal Investigations

1. If there is an ongoing criminal investigation it is important to explain to the family members that they may be contacted to assist with the investigation.
2. It is suggested practice to use separate notification teams for the victim and perpetrator for death notifications.

**IV. Training**

- A. Law enforcement personnel who are assigned responsibilities associated with delivering an in-person death notification to next-of-kin will receive training on the procedures to do so prior to conducting a notification. Periodic retraining is recommended at a frequency of every three (3) years.
- B. Training on delivering in-person death notifications will include agency procedures on the following areas to include but not be limited to:
  1. Planning the in-person death notification
  2. Assembling the death notification team
  3. Preparing for delivery of in-person death notification
  4. Delivering the in-person death notification
  5. Conducting post notification and follow-up
  6. Addressing special circumstances.

By order of the Sheriff



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