

	<b>GENERAL ORDER</b>	<b>Effective: 10-01-2021</b>	<b># 04-06</b>
		<b>Section:</b> <b>Personnel</b>	<b>Replaces or Modifies:</b> N/A
		<b>Title:</b> <b>Traumatic Events Assistance</b>	
<b>Issued by: Chief Deputy Mattie Provost</b>			

**Purpose:**

To aid in dealing with the emotional trauma associated with involvement in a life threatening confrontation or other physically or emotionally traumatic incident. To establish procedures for employee mental health leave associated with the traumatic event(s).

**Policy:**

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (FBCSO) recognizes that the well-being of its employees is its greatest asset and the nature of the activities performed by our Agency will bring employees into situations that are dangerous and at times highly traumatic. It is the policy of the FBCSO to follow the guidelines in this General Order to aid in the mitigation/recovery of employees touched by traumatic events in the course of their duties. At the same time, physical and mental awareness includes a responsibility to properly care for employees affected by traumatic events they may have handled during the course of their duties. This policy will comply with SB 1359, Mental Health Leave for Police Officers, effective 9/1/2021.

**Procedure:**

- I. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)
  - A. The FBCSO offers CISM services to its employees in a formalized process as detailed in a document entitled FORT BEND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT SERVICES – this document is considered an attachment to this General Order.
  - B. CISM team and services are headed by a Captain appointed by the Chief Deputy. The appointed Captain is the CISM Coordinator and is responsible for the following in regards to this role
    1. Maintaining the document described in Section I.A of this General Order, updating same as needed, getting approval for updates from the Chief Deputy, and insuring that the updated document is distributed to all employees (this may be accomplished via an e-mail).
    2. Oversight over selection, training, retention, and all other aspects of a CISM Team (with approval through the chain of command to the Chief Deputy in areas concerning changes to said document and/or changes to process / team members).
    3. Establish communication method so that CISM is aware of incidents that would be eligible for CISM services.
    4. Managing any contractual agreements concerning CISM as applicable including but not limited to interactions with and direction given to any person/entity so contracted to provide clinical director services subject to appropriate supervisory direction from his/her chain of command.
    5. Keeping his/her chain of command apprised of results or issues (while maintaining confidentiality of the process as is appropriate).
  - C. Division Commanders are to provide support to the appointed Captain so that this function may be most efficiently performed.
  - D. Participation in CISM services is voluntary; however, it is highly recommended as a positive way of dealing with the effects of traumatic events.
  
- II. Physical/Mental Examinations and related topics
  - A. The Chief Deputy may order that an employee undergo physical and/or mental examination(s) in cases where an employee is involved in a traumatic event if the Chief Deputy determines it is in the best interests of the employee and/or Agency. This authority is

in addition to authority found in General Order 02-01.

- B. An employee involved in a traumatic event will also be informed of other assistance options that are available (one current example is the Fort Bend County's Employee Assistance Program where applicable) and employees will be directed towards the appropriate County Department that can explain any benefits the employee may have under his/her medical insurance policy. Division Commanders have primary responsibility for providing this assistance while keeping their chain of command informed to include the Chief Deputy.

III. Incidents where an employee is involved in a traumatic event – General Guidelines

- A. Division Commanders are responsible for monitoring these incidents and the well-being of employees.
- B. The Division Commander will immediately report via chain of command to the Chief Deputy any need for administrative action.
- C. The Chief Deputy will order any appropriate administrative action (this includes but is not limited to orders for examinations, administrative leave, specialized assignments).
- D. In all cases, Bureau Commanders (majors) and Division Commanders shall make necessary immediate orders and take actions consistent with Policy and Law to insure that the best interests of the employee and the Agency are maintained.
- E. The Captain appointed over the CISM will initiate appropriate support actions, while keeping the Division Commanders updated on actions as appropriate.
- F. The employee who is impacted by a traumatic experience or event may request Mental Health Leave in accordance with the policy established in this procedure.
  1. Immediately upon an employee's experience, the employee may inform the immediate supervisor of the need for Mental Health Leave.
  2. The supervisor will approve Mental Health Leave for up to 3 work days.
  3. The employee will be provided resources by the Sheriff's Office HR division and will be allowed time to meet necessary appointments and follow-up meetings.
  4. If the traumatic event establishes a workers compensation claim, the supervisor first report of injury will be completed per the Texas Department of Insurance guidelines (DWC).
  5. Employees who are referred for further healthcare assistance by a physician or mental health practitioner for a more extended treatment and recovery period will coordinate the use of benefits through the HR division.
  6. In certain circumstances, the employee may make a request to apply Family Medical Leave Act benefits. These benefits may run concurrently to the Workers Compensation benefits. (See Sec 710 – Workers Compensation.)
  7. Employees must remain conscious of the effect of job related medical assessments and the implication for any potential impairment that may occur (See Sec. 409 – Job Related Medical Assessments.)
  8. The focus of employee wellness is to enable employees to return to full duty with minimal disruption. Further action may involve assessment of an employee's ability to perform essential job functions. In all cases, reasonable accommodation will be provided, and when an employee cannot meet essential job functions, the employee may be reclassified to a position that can meet the physical restrictions of an employee.
  9. Light duty status is also an option for employees who will need additional time before returning to full duty. A request for light duty must be made to HR and approved by the Chief Deputy.
  10. When an employee participates in a healthcare recovery program, a physician's statement will be necessary before an employee can return to full duty.
  11. Employees are reminded of their responsibility to maintain TCOLE training compliance, firearms qualification and proficiency, and notification of off-duty employment status to their supervisors on an annual, or unscheduled basis, when necessary.
  12. Supervisors are required to keep confidential all information related to an employee's mental health leave, including, but not limited to reasons for leave, intervening medical or mental health physicians or staff, treatment strategies, or

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symptoms.

13. Refer to Fort Bend County Employee Information Manual Section 714 for additional guidelines.

- IV. Assistance to an employee who is seriously injured or killed while in the course of his/her duties
- A. The Sheriff and Chief Deputy will be notified as soon as possible.
  - B. The processes in this General Order do not detail investigatory issues (they are covered in other General Orders).
  - C. Provision of services as applicable in other parts of this General Order will be offered.
  - D. No information will be released to the public unless approved by the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or Assistant Chief Deputy over the PIO function.
    - 1. Identity of the employee will not be released prior to notification of next of kin.
    - 2. Notification of next of kin should be in person and if possible will be made by the Sheriff or someone specifically given the task by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy.
  - E. The Division Commanders are responsible for ensuring that an employee is accompanied by an employee of the FBCSO (preferably by a Sergeant or higher ranking authority) until it is confirmed that the employee or employee's family is no longer in need of immediate assistance.
    - 1. Division Commanders have authority to make necessary orders to aid the family in the immediate aftermath of these situations (example providing transport) as long as the provision of assistance is within reason. Any extraordinary measures will be referred to the Chief Deputy for resolution.
  - F. In the event of death under this section the Chief Deputy will make assignments for the following functions
    - 1. Primary contact representative who will be tasked with coordinating all assistance provided to the family including providing someone to act as a liaison for the family with the media and others to aid in the legitimate privacy interests of the family
    - 2. Coordination of funeral arrangements in accordance with the family's wishes (including honor guard details)
    - 3. Assistance to the family for benefits (life insurance, County/State/Federal benefits)
    - 4. Assistance and accompaniment for the family throughout the process [funeral through potential trial of any suspect(s)]
    - 5. All provision of assistance will be in accord with the family's wishes whenever possible and appropriate
- V. Only the Sheriff or Chief Deputy may authorize exceptions to this General Order.