

<b>PALM BEACH GARDENS POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>		
<b>NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN</b>		
<b>POLICY AND PROCEDURE 4.2.1.18</b>		
<b>Effective Date :</b> 05/16/2000	<b>Accreditation Standards:</b> CALEA 22.2.6 CFA	<b>Review Date:</b>

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**INTENT:** To establish guidelines for notifying the next of kin of deceased, seriously injured, or ill persons.

**ASSIGNED TO:** All Sworn and Non-Sworn Members

**REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Bureau and Investigations Unit Supervisors

**POLICY:** The Department has a moral responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to locate and notify the next-of-kin of deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill persons and that notification is performed promptly and in a considerate manner. This responsibility extends not only to incidents investigated by the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department, but to requests from other agencies and individuals.

### **1. NOTIFICATIONS HANDLED BY DEPARTMENT**

- a. Notifying next of kin (i.e., deceased, seriously injured, etc.) shall be as follows:
  - i. Those notifications generated from incidents occurring within the City of Palm Beach Gardens, and;
  - ii. Those reported to the department from another law enforcement agency or official.
- b. In cases involving death notification from incidents occurring within the City of Palm Beach Gardens, it shall be the responsibility of the assigned officer to make every effort to locate and notify the next of kin.
- c. Whenever circumstances dictate, this department shall assist with personal notification requested by other law enforcement agencies or outside government or medical facilities (or doctor).
- d. Department personnel will make every effort to deliver such notifications initiated by other agencies in person. The following should be considered when delivering notifications.
  - i. Officers will attempt to determine the effect of the notification and provide the necessary support.
  - ii. Officers should normally not make any notifications that are requested from parties whose identity cannot be otherwise confirmed without approval of the on duty Sergeant.
  - iii. Officers should attempt to provide necessary support service for the next of kin relatives of deceased, seriously injured or seriously ill persons whenever appropriate.

### **2. SPECIAL NOTIFICATIONS AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION:**

- a. Any time officers are called on to investigate any criminally caused, suspicious or unattended death (not in the presence of a medical doctor or medical care facility) and the medical examiner's office must be notified.
- b. The investigating officer will coordinate custody and care of the body (or bodies) with the medical examiner's office, and the deceased family if present.

- c. Notification of next of kin will generally be the responsibility of the assigned officer, all information needed regarding suspicious or unattended deaths, should be coordinated between the investigations unit and the medical examiner's office.
- d. Identification of deceased persons to the media will be left as the responsibility of the public information officer, and/or the Investigations Bureau Major.

### **3. PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFYING NEXT OF KIN:**

- a. Whenever a request to locate or notify next of kin is received by the communications center from another agency or individual, it will immediately be assigned to the appropriate division for prompt action. If the on duty Sergeant of the affected division determines that the request requires the assistance of a detective, he/she will immediately contact the investigations division supervisor to handle the assignment.
- b. Whenever an incident involving a death, seriously injured, or seriously ill person is investigated by the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department, it is the responsibility of the assigned officer to see that all available resources are utilized in an effort to locate and notify the next-of-kin.
- c. Notification can be accomplished through personal contact or through another agency. Notification to the next-of-kin should include such information as disposition of body (medical examiner's office, funeral home) or the name of the hospital to which the injured or ill party was taken. When available, details of the incident will be provided. Information as to the person notified, such as name, address, telephone number, and relationship should be included in both the incident report and the medical examiner attachment.
  - i. Whenever possible, the officer or detective notifying next-of-kin will attempt to obtain the assistance of a clergyman, relative, or close friend prior to notification or as soon as possible thereafter.
  - ii. In the event that the next-of-kin cannot be notified, all information concerning their identity, address, telephone number, place of business, etc., should be documented in the incident report and the report referred to the detective division. Report must state: Next of kin not notified.
  - iii. Notification of death or serious injury should not be made by phone directly to the next of kin. Utilize another agency to make personal contact.
- d. The supervisor of the assigned officer or detective will ensure that a prompt reply is made to other agencies or individuals requesting the assistance of this department.

### **4. PROCEDURE WHEN DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE INVOLVED**

- a. Whenever a department employee is killed or seriously injured in the line of duty, The Chief of Police shall, whenever possible, make the notification to the employee's family/next-of-kin personally or designate a senior staff official to make the notification personally. The Chief or Designee may request the services of a Department Chaplain to assist in making notifications, but the Chief or Designee should also be present at the time of notification.
- b. If the employee has no family locally, the appropriate law enforcement agency shall be contacted to make the notification. That agency will be provided with the name of a senior staff officer whom the family/next-of-kin can contact for more information.
- c. In all cases, the Chief of Police shall designate a senior staff officer to act as liaison with the employee's family/next-of-kin. The responsibilities of this liaison shall include:
  - i. Assisting the family at the hospital
  - ii. Supporting the family at the funeral and burial
  - iii. Helping the family with legal and benefits matters
  - iv. Counseling the family regarding finances and other possible problems
  - v. Supporting the family during criminal proceedings, if any
  - vi. Maintaining long-term contact with the family and keeping informed of family needs
- d. The liaison may also draw on other resources to accomplish those responsibilities, e.g., the Employee Assistance Program, County Victim Services, ALERT, etc.

- e. These services may also be offered to the family/next-of-kin for non-duty related injury or death as appropriate.

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DRAFTED: 05-16-2000      FILED: 4.2.1.18.pdf

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**APPROVED:**



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**Stephen J. Stepp**  
Chief of Police

03/10/2003  
**Date**