



POLICE • FIRE
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

GENERAL ORDER

WAUPACA POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: **OFFICER IN CRISIS**

SCOPE: All Department Personnel
DISTRIBUTION: General Orders Manual

REFERENCE:

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PURPOSE: Provide guidance and procedure to incidents in which an employee of Waupaca Police Department is having a mental health related crisis, including crises that may not result in commitment. Waupaca Police Department understands that Law Enforcement Officers have a difficult and stressful job filled with traumatic incidents and Officer Wellness should be prioritized.

This General Order consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. DEFINITIONS
- II. GENERAL INFORMATION
- III. OFFICER IN CRISES
- IV. SUICIDAL/HOMICIDAL OFFICER
- V. REINTEGRATION BACK TO WORK
- VI. OFFICER SUICIDE

I. DEFINITIONS

- 1) **MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS-** An incident in which someone is experiencing intense feelings of personal distress (e.g., anxiety, depression, anger, fear, panic, hopelessness, traumatic event), obvious changes in functioning (e.g., neglect of personal hygiene, unusual behavior) and/or catastrophic life events (e.g., disruptions in personal relationships, support systems or living arrangements; loss of autonomy or parental rights; victimization or natural disasters), which may, but not necessarily, result in an upward trajectory of intensity culminating in thoughts or acts that are dangerous to self and/or others.
- 2) **PEER SUPPORT TEAM-** A group consisting of sworn and civilian employees who have been trained in crisis intervention or peer support to

assist employees with stressors both on and off duty.

- 3) PEER SUPPORT MEMBER- Members of the agency who are trained in crisis intervention and peer support and are accepted to the Peer Support Team.
- 4) EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)- Mental Health Resources that are available to all Waupaca Police Department Employees and their families.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1) A mental health crisis, emotional adjustment issues, and substance abuse shall be seen as a treatable unless deemed otherwise by a Mental Health Professional.
- 2) An officer experiencing a mental health crisis shall remain in good standing at Waupaca Police Department while they undergo treatment.
- 3) Every possible step to maintain the Officer's privacy should be maintained both during and following the crisis. Confidentiality of the incident and the process shall be maintained as much as possible.
- 4) Employee Assistance Program appointment are subject to HIPPA and nothing discussed in those appointment will be divulged to Waupaca Police Department. If EAP is ordered by the department, the Chief of Police will only be advised that the employee attended their appointment, followed the recommendations of the Mental Health Professional, and when they are cleared to return to work.

III. OFFICER IN CRISES

- 1) Officers that notice a change in another employee's behavior or are aware of the officer dealing with traumatic or stressful circumstances either at home or at work, should encourage that officer to either reach out to Peer Support or Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Officers shall advise a supervisor if the behavior is negatively impacting the work environment or could result in them becoming a threat to themselves or others. Signs of change in behavior include but are not limited to:
 - Change in work productivity over a period of time
 - Increased agitation
 - Distancing themselves from other
 - Decreased interest in things that officer normally enjoyed
 - Showing up late regularly
 - Change in personal hygiene
- 2) Upon notification that an Officer is in crisis either at work or on their time off, the Chief of Police shall be notified and the Chief of Police or their designee shall attempt contact, in person, with the officer in crisis at a reasonable time.

If the Officer just experienced a traumatic issue at home, time to grieve shall be balanced with the Officer's need for intervention. The Chief of Police or their designee should make a reasonable attempt to bring a member of the Peer Support Team with them.

- 3) If the Officer in crisis voluntarily takes assistance from Peer Support or EAP, all appointments and meetings should be maintained by that officer. As long as the officer is maintaining acceptable job performance, no other steps should be necessary. See **General Order 2.16** for peer support referral.
- 4) Officers in crisis who do not voluntarily take the assistance through an avenue of their choosing and their crisis is affecting their job performance or appears to be getting worse, may be mandated by the Chief of Police to participate in EAP. Depending on the cause and severity of the crisis, the Chief of Police can dictate a change in schedule including but not limited to light duty or administrative leave.
- 5) If deemed necessary, the Chief of Police may require a psychological evaluation prior to an Officer's return to duty.
- 6) All information and requirements of the officer in crisis process should be explained to the officer in crisis in a timely manner. If the officer in crisis is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is emotionally unable to discuss the process at the time of contact with the Chief of Police or their designee, another meeting shall be scheduled to go through the process when the officer is sober or emotionally ready to have the discussion. Peer Support Officers or Union Representatives should be offered and may be present at the officer's request.

IV. Suicidal/Homicidal Officer

- 1) If an employee of Waupaca Police Department is a threat to themselves or others, the on duty or on call supervisor shall be notified immediately. The supervisor shall notify the Chief of Police upon being notified.
- 2) If the incident occurs within the jurisdiction of the City of Waupaca Police Department, a supervisor shall respond to the scene. Upon the scene being deemed safe and the Officer in crisis no longer an immediate threat to themselves or others (i.e. no access to weapons), the fewest resources possible should remain on scene to respect the privacy of the officer in crisis. The on scene supervisor shall be the one to contact Waupaca County Department of Health and Human Services Crisis Worker. The supervisor shall request the back up on call worker, as they do not regularly have direct contact with Law Enforcement. Radio traffic shall be kept to a minimal amount and the incident report shall be firewalled immediately to mitigate sensitive information being divulged.
- 3) If the incident occurs outside the jurisdiction of the City of Waupaca Police

Department, a supervisor shall contact the responsible agency upon hearing of the incident. The supervisor may offer resources to that agency but shall respect that the investigation belongs to that agency and shall not interfere with their investigation. Requests should be made to mitigate the confidentiality of that officer.

- 4) If the incident occurs within the Waupaca Police Department building, all non-essential staff shall be ordered out of the building and the incident should be secured to one area of the building.
- 5) A supervisor shall secure any and all department issued weapons from the Officer as soon as possible, but should explain to the Officer that they will receive their weapons back as soon as they complete their treatment and are cleared to return to work. The Officer's badge and department identification shall be left with the Officer unless the Officer requests the removal or other issues deem it necessary to secure.
- 6) Voluntary Inpatient- If the Officer is determined to be a threat to themselves or others and voluntarily receives inpatient treatment, Waupaca Police Department will offer to assist that Officer and their family in getting the treatment, and any other requests they may have. This includes but is not limited to providing transportation to and from the facility in an unmarked vehicle. This, however, is completely up to that Officer and their family's wishes. If the Officer requests a specific coworker to transport them, that request should be honored if possible and shall be considered a special assignment and not subject to short notice overtime call in requirements. Follow up contact with the Officer and family shall be done at a reasonable time.
- 7) Involuntary Commitment- If the Officer is determined to be a threat to themselves or others, does not go voluntarily to inpatient treatment, and is committed under Chapter 51 of Wisconsin State Statutes. Mutual aid shall be requested from Appleton Police Department to assist in the transportation to Medical Clearance and the Mental Health Facility. Unless medical needs dictate otherwise, the transporting Officer should be instructed to transport the Officer to Thedacare Neenah for medical clearance. If the Officer is wearing anything that identifies them as a Law Enforcement Officer, steps should be made to allow them to change if it is safe to do so. As soon as the other agency takes over, information should only be divulged to the supervisor working. It should be noted that involuntary commitments may result in commitments lasting for periods of 60-90 days where the Officer involved may not be allowed to handle a firearm if dictated by the courts.
- 8) The point of contact for the Officer involved and their family with Waupaca Police Department shall be the Chief of Police unless otherwise deemed necessary. All lines of communication with steps and requirements to return to work shall be honest and open. The Chief of Police may assign a liaison to assist the family in the officer's return to duty.

- 9) A psychological evaluation shall be completed prior to returning to duty following any inpatient treatment at department expense.

V. REINTEGRATION BACK TO WORK

- 1) Upon completion of all treatment and evaluations, if the Officer is cleared to return to duty, a meeting shall be scheduled in a timely manner to reintegrate them back to work. Present at this meeting shall be The Chief of Police or their designee, the officer involved, and The Peer Support Supervisor or the Officer's direct Supervisor. The Officer may also request a family member, union rep, or coworker of their choice to be present at the meeting for support.
- 2) All department equipment shall be returned to the Officer upon return to full duty.
- 3) Any and all limitations or reasonable accommodations that the officer may need to transition back into work should be discussed prior to their return to duty.
- 4) Either the Officer's supervisor or an assigned Peer Support Officer shall be assigned to assist the Officer in their return to duty and to check in on them over the first two rotations. The period of time for the check-ins may be extended if deemed necessary or if requested by the Officer involved. These check-ins shall just consist of making sure the officer does not need anything and shall not be prying into the situation the officer went through.

VI. OFFICER SUICIDE

- 1) If an employee of Waupaca Police Department dies by suspected suicide, the impact to the survivors is significant and should not be underestimated. The City of Waupaca Police Department will request all appropriate resources and services for the employee's family and all department employees and their families.
- 2) If the suicide were to occur in the City of Waupaca, an outside agency shall be requested to investigate the incident to ensure an impartial investigation and protect Officers of the Waupaca Police Department from having to conduct an extremely traumatic investigation.
- 3) Upon becoming aware that an Officer has died by suspected suicide, the Supervisor shall contact all Supervisors regardless of on call status from highest ranking down. All available Supervisors should respond to Waupaca Police Department. A meeting of all Supervisors available shall be conducted as soon as all responding Supervisors arrive at the Waupaca Police Department.
- 4) A Supervisor shall contact the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Death Response

Team at 920-419-6100 for resources and assistance.

- 5) Upon confirmation that family of the deceased Officer has been notified, Supervisors shall contact all Department Employees individually advising them of the loss of an Officer. If possible, these notifications should be done in person.
- 6) A liaison Officer shall be assigned to the family by the Chief of Police immediately to be the direct line of communication between the family and the department.
- 7) An emergency department meeting should be conducted as soon as feasible. This meeting shall be inclusive of all Officers and their families. Mutual aid from an outside Peer Support Team shall be requested if the Law Enforcement Death Response Team is unavailable.
- 8) In the case of a non-felonious suicide, the family will be advised of the appropriate funeral protocols. These are generally defined as a Category 2 funeral by the Wisconsin Honor Guard Association.
- 9) If the employee was under investigation at the time of the suicide, or the suicide appears felonious in nature, the Chief of Police will determine the department's involvement in any funeral.
- 10) The family's wishes and requests shall be followed, as much as possible, by Waupaca Police Department. Funeral arrangements will only be sent out to other Law Enforcement Agencies if requested by the family.
- 11) The Waupaca Police Department shall not release any personal information about the employee or incident to the media. If a media request is made, the Waupaca Police Department will ask the media to respect the privacy of the family.
- 12) This same protocol should be followed with recently retired members of the City of Waupaca Police Department.

Brian Hoelzel
Chief of Police

This General Order cancels and supersedes any and all written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

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