



City of Racine Police Department
Policy and Procedure

Number: 118

Subject: Traumatic Incidents		
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POLICY

The Racine Police Department recognizes that when a member is involved in a traumatic incident, this same member is also a victim of the incident. Although being placed in a life threatening situation and being obligated to react appropriately may potentially cause death or great bodily harm to another human being through the use of force, the event is still a traumatic act for the officer and may subject the member to possible physical and psychological reactions.

Such reactions may include, but are not limited to, sleep loss, loss of appetite, flashbacks, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It is the purpose of this policy to effectively deal with the physical and psychological reactions resulting from a traumatic incident.

DEFINITIONS

Traumatic Incident – Any incident involving a member of the Racine Police Department, either on or off duty, which is outside the usual realm of human experience and is markedly distressing. Such traumatic stressors usually involve the perceived threat to the member's physical wellbeing or to someone in close proximity. These incidents may include, but are not limited to: officer-involved shootings (regardless of injury); officer-involved major motor vehicle accidents; serious assault against an officer; or any other incident where it is reasonable to believe Department personnel may experience post-traumatic stress as a result of the incident. Repeated exposure to traumatic incidents can lead to cumulative stress.

Crisis – A response to an adverse situation, manifest or anticipated, wherein psychological homeostasis (equilibrium) is disrupted and one's usual coping mechanisms have failed to reestablish homeostasis. This is evidenced by functional distress or impairment.

Crisis Intervention – A short term helping process (acute intervention designed to mitigate the crisis response). Crisis intervention targets the response, not the event.

NOTE

Because of the possibility of physical and psychological reactions, the member directly involved in the traumatic incident will be reassigned from their regular duties to administrative functions. Reassignment of a member involved in a traumatic incident is not a Departmental judgment against the officer, but a sound management practice for the welfare of the officer, the good of the department, and the good of the public it serves.

After being involved in a critical incident the member shall receive crisis intervention. After being reassigned to administrative functions, it is important for the member involved in the traumatic incident to receive professional emotional and psychological support to identify the physical and psychological effects of a traumatic incident and to satisfactorily deal with them.

PROCEDURE

METHOD

Once a member is determined to be involved in a traumatic incident as defined above, crisis intervention will begin and the following guidelines shall apply:

1. The Incident commander will notify the Peer Support Coordinator. A member of the Peer Support Team will meet with the member for an initial debriefing. Other members who were present for the traumatic incident but not directly involved will also be debriefed.
2. If it is determined that reassignment is necessary the Chief of Police will reassign the member from his/her regular duties to administrative duties at the start of the next business day.
 - a. A member assigned to administrative duties will work a weekend off schedule during normal business hours (8:00am – 4:00pm). Holiday time (097) and free days (096) will accumulate according to the member's day off schedule.
 - b. The Chief of Police or the designated Commander will confer with the member to decide if the member should report to the Safety Building or remain away from work pending professional treatment.
 - c. A member assigned to an administrative function will receive full pay and benefits even if not required to physically report to the Racine Police Department for work.
 - d. A member not responding to work must call the Chief of Police or the Support Services Manager at the start of each business day and remain available during regular business hours. The member is still subject to immediate recall to the Racine Police Department for purposes of investigation, administrative review, or professional treatment.
3. Within 72 business hours (health care professional schedule permitting), the member is required to attend a confidential debriefing with a mental health care professional.
 - a. Debriefings are not considered treatment.
 - b. Debriefings are an opportunity for members to discuss traumatic incidents with health care professionals in a strictly confidential setting.
 - c. Spouses and significant others are encouraged to attend with the member to the extent deemed advisable by the mental health care professional.
 - d. The Office of the Chief of Police will make arrangements for the debriefing.
 - e. The Department will use a health care professional from outside the community and the department will cover the costs of the debriefing.
4. Once the debriefing is completed, members are required to attend a "Fitness for Duty" psychological examination as a condition of employment.
 - a. The purpose of the "Fitness for Duty" examination is to determine if the incident has caused psychological trauma that would place a member at risk to himself/herself or others during the normal course of his/her law enforcement duties. If the member has suffered psychological trauma, professional treatment will be required. The purpose of the treatment would be to assist in quick and satisfactory closure to the incident.
 - b. The Office of the Chief of Police will make arrangements for the examination and the Department will cover the costs of the examination.
 - c. A licensed psychologist or psychiatrist other than the individual responsible for the debriefing will conduct the examination. The Department will seek a psychologist or psychiatrist whose practice is located in another community for the examination.
 - d. The member's examination results (whether the member is fit for duty or not) will be forwarded to the Chief of Police. The details of the examination will remain confidential.
 - e. A member is not permitted any type of representation or outside support from other officers, Peer Support members, or family members during the examination.
5. Once a member has been certified by a health care professional as fit for regular duties, the Chief of Police may return the member to regular duties provided no other administrative, criminal, or independent reviews are pending on the traumatic incident.
 - a. Should other administrative, criminal, or independent reviews be pending, the Chief of Police will decide whether to continue the administrative assignment, return the member to inside duties on the member's regular shift, or return the member to regular field duties, until the pending investigations of the traumatic incident are completed.

- b. The Chief of Police, at his own discretion, may order a member to return to the health care professional responsible for the initial "Fitness For Duty" examination for additional examination in the event that at some later time, the member appears to not have adjusted satisfactorily to the incident.
 - 1) In addition, the Chief of Police, at his own discretion, may return the member to administrative duties until the member has again been certified by the health care professional as being fit to return to regular duty.
 - 2) The Racine Police Department will cover the expenses associated with the additional examination and any subsequent professional assistance.

RELATED PROCEDURES

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