



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF POLICE CHAPLAINS

B02 – Death Notification

B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Types of Death Calls

- ☐ Natural Causes
- ☐ Traffic Accident
- ☐ Household or Industrial Accident
- ☐ Homicide
- ☐ Suicide
- ☐ Shootings by Police
- ☐ Child Death



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Preparation

- ☐ Assume Nothing
- ☐ Identify those involved
- ☐ Check your information
 - Hospitalized or deceased
 - Who, where, when
 - Next of Kin
 - Location
 - Relationship
 - Special Circumstances (physical, mental)
- ☐ Proceed as quickly as practical



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Procedure

- ☐ Face to face; never by phone if possible
- ☐ Present identification
- ☐ Ascertain identity of deceased and relationship
- ☐ Have everyone be seated
- ☐ Be specific and use clear language
 - Use words like “Dead” and “Killed”
 - Do not use words like “Passed On” or “They’re Gone”



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Procedure

- ☐ Give pertinent information
- ☐ Be compassionate
- ☐ Answer questions truthfully
- ☐ Do not speculate
- ☐ Begin to assemble support for the family such as minister, family, neighbors
- ☐ Determine funeral home preference
- ☐ Explain Medical Examiner if appropriate



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Procedure

- ☐ Allow people to act out their emotions
- ☐ Be truthful with information
 - Provide appropriate information
 - Do not share information regarding the ongoing investigation
 - Advise family when necessary on how to find further information



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

What NOT to Say

- ❑ I know how you feel
- ❑ Time heals all wounds
- ❑ You'll get over this
- ❑ You must go on with your life
- ❑ He didn't know what hit him



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

What NOT to Say

- ❑ You can always find someone worse off than yourself
- ❑ You must focus on your precious memories
- ❑ It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Religious Clichés

- ❑ It must have been his/her time
- ❑ Someday you'll understand why
- ❑ It was actually a blessing because . . .
- ❑ God must have needed her more than you did
- ❑ God never gives us more than we can handle
- ❑ Only the good die young



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

What TO Say

- ❑ I am sorry
- ❑ I am so sorry for your loss
- ❑ Accept the survivor's expression of grief
- ❑ Don't try to talk the survivor out of his/her grief
- ❑ Sometimes saying nothing at all



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Reactions of Family

- ❑ Physical
- ❑ Emotional
- ❑ Mental
- ❑ Spiritual



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Legal Aspects

- ❑ Verify facts to be sure identification is correct
- ❑ Don't make notification by phone if possible
- ❑ Don't leave survivors alone
- ❑ Have an officer, other personnel, or another chaplain accompany
- ❑ Avoid media contact; do not release information
- ❑ Provide information about Medical Examiner procedures if applicable



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Reactions to Death Notification

- ☐ Shock
- ☐ Disbelief
- ☐ Confusion
- ☐ Physical illness
- ☐ Extreme emotional response
- ☐ Numbness
- ☐ Quiet



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Support System

- ☐ Family members
- ☐ Neighbors
- ☐ Family Minister
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Co-workers



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Media and Investigation

- ☐ Never share information with media unless directed by police personnel
- ☐ Media should not be involved in notification process
- ☐ Investigation is separate from notification process
- ☐ Never relate crime investigation information to survivors or media



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014

Basic Principles

- ☐ In person
- ☐ In time
- ☐ In pairs
- ☐ In plain language
- ☐ With compassion



B02 – Death Notification - Revised April 2014