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Police Spiritual Welfare Info-Journal:

Caretaking of Family Members of Severely Injured or Killed Officers

The information of people on serious injuries or death of a relative in operations demands special competences and is the duty of executive officers. Uncertainty and fear of the reaction of those affected are normal. Personal preparation of such rare but always possible situations makes it easier to address them.

Preparation

Keep calm! Never deliver the message via telephone! It could cause uncontrollable reactions, such as panic trips to the accident scene or hospital. Act quickly to avoid rumors. Obtain reliable, accurate information on the exact circumstances of the action, in case of severe injuries try to get information directly from the hospital. Try to reach the spiritual welfare of the police, responsible local clergy or other mental health professionals and ask for assistance. Decide who is going to deliver the message. Possible important additional factors, such as known diseases, children living in the household (age) and so on, have to be considered. If necessary go there with several people.

Delivering the message

If necessary, introduce yourself at the door with your name and function; clarify the identity of the person at the door and ask for entrance. Never deliver the message on the doorstep. Ask for seating for all and expect individuals to collapse.

Speak clearly of death or serious injury, " Mrs NN, unfortunately I have to tell you something very bad. Your husband has just been killed in a police operation / is seriously injured." In case of a deadly event do not raise false hopes, but talk explicitly about death. In case of severe injury transmit only secured medical information. Offer a ride to the hospital. Affected persons never should drive alone. Do not make accusations. Expect a wide range of possible reactions: freezing, seeming disinterest, non-admittance, crying, screaming, wandering, collapsing, internal and external aggressiveness. In this phase the affected should not be left alone. Give room for complaint. Show pity without identifying with the victims. Give sensitive but truthful answers about questions concerning the circumstances. Ask for social resources in the surrounding environment after the first shock is over. Provide, if necessary, support of the government or church. Guarantee that the police will take care of the affected persons (of which there are plenty of positive examples). With the beginning stabilization of the affected say goodbye, again providing reliable and consistent assistance!

Aftercare

In your own interest: take care of your own if you are emotionally disturbed (e.g. contact your local spiritual welfare service of the police).