



Colorado Springs Police Department

General Order

704 Psychological Services in Deadly Force Incidents

Section 700 – Employee Wellness

Active Date: 8/25/2023

Supersedes Date: 4/23/2020

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to describe post-incident psychological interventions for officers directly involved in a deadly force incident.

.02 Cross Reference

[GO 702 Peer Support Program](#)

[GO 1824 Psychological Fitness for Duty](#)

[DL-210-03 Chaplaincy Corps](#)

[DL-700-10 Wellness Debriefs](#)

[DL-1106-01 Deadly Force Investigations](#)

.03 Discussion

Officers affected by deadly force incidents should have access to trauma-informed, culturally competent psychological services. The intent of these services is to support officers and their families following such incidents.

This directive describes a separate and distinct process from any fitness for duty assessment, administrative, or investigative procedures. The fact that an officer has been involved in a deadly force incident is not grounds for a psychological fitness for duty examination (FFD).

.04 Policy

Officers involved in deadly force incidents will have access to supportive post-incident services (CRS § 16-2.5-403).

.05 Definitions

Deadly force incident: The use of deadly force by an officer, whether or not the use of deadly force

resulted in injury or death to a person. Deadly force has the same meaning as defined in [GO 500 Use of Force](#).

Directly Involved: Includes any officer who uses deadly force, whether it results in any injury or death to a person.

Involved Employee: Any employee who is physically present in the immediate vicinity of another officer using deadly force, and who was at significant risk of serious bodily injury or death during the deadly force incident. This employee did not use or attempt to use deadly force themselves. This includes but may not be limited to officers and non-sworn employees of our agency.

Witness Employee: Any officer or non-sworn employee who is present or observes another employee use or attempt to use deadly force but does not use or attempt to use deadly force themselves, and who is not at significant risk of serious bodily injury or death during the deadly force incident. This includes but may not be limited to officers and non-sworn employees of our agency.

.10 Pre-Incident Preparation

All employees will periodically receive training and/or educational material about both normal and problematic post-traumatic reactions commonly associated with officer-involved shootings, deadly force, and other critical incidents.

.15 Post-Incident Services

Steps to ensure the safety of officers at the scene of a deadly force incident are described in [DL-1106-01 Deadly Force Investigations](#).

Following a deadly force incident, the lieutenant in the Investigations Division who is on call to respond to such incidents will make the following notifications for an immediate response:

- Peer Support Liaison
- Victim Advocacy Unit (VAU)

The peer support liaison will notify a representative from the department's contracted psychological services provider as well as peer supporters. Personnel from the contracted psychological services provider and VAU will respond to the location where the officer(s) will be processed. They will separately have a brief meeting with the involved officer(s), once the officer(s) are available for contact. Peer supporters will respond at the discretion of the liaison to the location of the involved officer(s) and/or other locations as deemed necessary (i.e., involved officer's substation/shift).

In the following days, the wellness sergeant will evaluate the need for support for the officer's shift, communications center, and other affected personnel in the department. This support may include,

but is not limited to, group meetings with a counselor, individual meetings with a counselor, peer support deployment to divisions, peer support follow up, chaplaincy services, and/or distribution of educational material.

.20 Officer Requirements

Any officer directly involved in a deadly force incident is required to attend one confidential post-incident informational appointment with the department's contracted psychological service provider. A directly involved officer will contact the contracted provider within 24 hours of a deadly force incident to schedule the appointment. The appointment should occur within the first 72 hours following a deadly force incident.

The contracted provider will give CSPD verification through the Human Resources Section that the officer attended the appointment; however, the information discussed in that appointment is confidential within the limitations of Colorado law (CRS § 13-90-107(g), CRS § 12-245-220). The contracted provider will reach out to officers periodically throughout the year following the deadly force incident to provide information, referrals, and support. Any psychological services beyond the initial post-incident informational appointment are voluntary.

.25 Ongoing Post-Incident Services

There are several options officers may choose for ongoing post-incident services. Involved officers and any other affected employee are welcome, but not required, to use any and all services available to them.

Counseling

All employees may access free professional counseling for work-related issues through the department's contracted psychological service providers. This counseling service is also available to the officer's spouse/partner and children, for issues arising from their loved one's employment.

Other counseling options for employees include the city's contracted Employee Assistance Provider (EAP), which provides six free counseling sessions, Teladoc mental health services, and mental health professionals in the community (either via insurance or through private pay). All counseling provided by a mental health professional is confidential within the limitations of Colorado law.

Peer Support

Peer supporters are trained paraprofessionals, endorsed by the department via a designation by the chief to act in that capacity. Communication with peer supporters acting in that capacity under CRS § 13-90-107(m)(I) are confidential within the limitations of Colorado law as well as the parameters identified in [GO 702 Peer Support Program](#). Employees may choose to speak with any peer support

team member.

Victim Advocacy Unit

Colorado Springs Police Department victim advocates will provide support, referrals, and other assistance to involved officers and their families, and others as appropriate in a deadly force incident.

The Victim Advocacy Unit is required to offer a family meeting to an involved officer. One purpose of this meeting is to allow the officer and the officer's family member(s) to meet the professionals involved in the investigation and review of the deadly force incident. In the meeting, officers and family members will be given general information about the process followed by investigators and prosecutors. Additionally, with a victim advocate and/or the department's contracted psychological services provider in attendance, the officer and family members will receive information and referrals.

Communication with CSPD victim advocates is not confidential under Colorado law.

Chaplains

Colorado Springs Police chaplains are volunteer clergy of various faiths and denominations who provide emotional and spiritual support to department members. Communication with a chaplain is confidential within the limitations of Colorado Law and [DL-210-03 Chaplaincy Corps](#).

Wellness Check-ins

At intervals of 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months, following a deadly force incident, the wellness sergeant will notify the directly involved officer's commander as a reminder of their involvement in the previous deadly force incident. This notification is to remind the officer's chain of command of the incident. The officer's immediate supervisor is required to speak with the officer for wellness purposes, and to remind the officer of the resources the department has available if needed.

The wellness sergeant will also provide the notification on the same intervals to the officer's selected peer support member for wellness check-ins.

.30 Administrative Leave

[DL-1106-01 Deadly Force Investigations](#) requires the "directly involved" officer who uses deadly force to be on administrative leave for three (3) days. During this portion of administrative leave, there are a number of requirements of the officer, including interviews, appointments, and re-qualifying at the range.

In addition to the three (3) days administrative leave in DL-1106-01 Deadly Force Investigations, officers who use deadly force are required to have an additional three (3) days of administrative leave for the purpose of psychological well-being. Officers who use deadly force will have six (6) total days of administrative leave before returning to duty.

Officers who meet this policy's definition of "involved employee" are also required to have three (3) days of administrative leave for the purpose of psychological well-being. When an incident occurs the Investigations Division commander will make the determination of whether an employee qualifies as an "involved employee." If questions arise, all final decisions about whether an employee fits this definition will be made by a deputy chief.

This psychological well-being administrative leave is designed to allow the involved officer time away from their duties as an officer, including interviews and other actions related to the deadly force incident. Administrative leave does not include scheduled days off; it is in addition to any scheduled days off during that period of time.

Department members will not contact the officer to perform official duties while on this psychological well-being portion of administrative leave without the approval of a deputy chief. Contact for the purposes of coordinating a wellness debrief is allowed. Nothing in this directive prevents any department member from having informal contact with the officer (e.g., to provide support) during this time.

.35 Additional Leave Options

If an employee requires time off beyond what is provided as administrative leave, the employee is allowed to use applicable paid leave (to include sick leave) for mental health reasons. Supervisors may allow employees who do not qualify for administrative leave under this policy to use other paid leave to address their well-being.

If the employee has exhausted all their paid leave, they will discuss that need with the CSPD Human Resources manager; the manager will provide guidance, options, and other assistance to the requesting employee.

.40 Return to Duty

On the day a directly involved officer returns to duty, who regularly performs patrol functions or supporting patrol functions (e.g., Motors Unit, K-9 Unit) as their regular duty assignment, are required to be paired with another officer for a minimum of one shift. With supervisor approval, this arrangement can be extended up to four shifts. The purpose of having officers perform their duties as a "Baker unit" in this time is based on best practices for reintegration back to duty after a deadly force incident. It is an additional support to officers, not an oversight or evaluation of them.

Therefore, it is most beneficial when officers are allowed to choose the person from their division/shift to be their partner.

In addition to the required partnering with another officer for one shift, there are a number of other considerations for an involved officer's return to duty following a deadly force incident. All of the considerations listed below are suggestions, and an officer's use of these options is completely voluntary.

- While officers are required to qualify at the range with their duty weapon before returning to duty, officers may consider a practice session at the range with a mental health professional or a peer support team member. The purpose of this practice session is to allow for the officer to effectively address any psychological triggers that may come up when firing their weapon again for the first time following the deadly force incident.
- Officers may consider returning to the scene of the deadly force incident post-interview with a mental health professional, peer support team member, or other support person. Again, the purpose of this suggestion is to effectively address any psychological triggers that may come up when the officer is in the same environment as the deadly force incident.
- Officers may consider requesting a temporary duty assignment (TDY) other than their regular assignment. It is important to note, this TDY is not light duty; the officer will be in a full duty capacity. Officers will make this request of the CSPD human resources manager, who will discuss appropriate arrangements with the officer's chain of command. A TDY under this directive is typically limited to a continuous two-week time period but may be extended on a case by case basis in consultation with the CSPD Human Resources Manager. The purpose of this TDY is to allow the officer to return to full duty in an assignment that does not have the same likelihood of exposure to the circumstances that resulted in the use of deadly force.