

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

August 27, 2021

NO.

200-04

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 200-04, dated October 20, 2020

SUBJECT: ASSISTANCE TO EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN CRITICAL INCIDENTS

POLICY

The Houston Police Department is concerned about the well-being of all of its employees and recognizes that the psychological impacts of a critical incident may extend beyond the moment of the actual incident.

The department's Psychological Services Division provides post-critical incident intervention for any employee who sustains a serious injury, is exposed to a critical incident, causes death or serious injury to another, or for any other circumstance as determined by the Chief of Police. In addition, the Psychological Services Division provides voluntary counseling for employees and their family members including significant others.

This General Order applies to all employees.

DEFINITIONS

Critical Incident. A work-related event that is extraordinary in nature with an expectation of producing a significant reaction on the part of an employee. All officer-involved shootings resulting in death or serious injury to another person shall be considered a *critical incident*. An employee may be directly or indirectly involved with the *critical incident* and suffer a physical or psychological injury as a result.

Fitness-for-Duty Evaluation. A formal, specialized physical or psychological examination of an employee because of (1) objective evidence that the employee is unable to safely or effectively perform the essential functions of assigned job duties and (2) a reasonable basis for believing that the inability to perform may be attributable to physical or psychological factors.

Post-Critical Incident Intervention. A stress management session with a staff psychologist to provide support, education, and an informal assessment to reduce the probability of long-lasting psychological and emotional problems resulting from a *critical incident*. The intervention is also designed to screen for unusual circumstances (past or present) that could intensify the impact of a *critical incident* on an employee.

Restricted Duty. A duty assignment aimed at providing an officer who is involved in a *critical incident* the opportunity to obtain emotional and psychological support. The officer shall be assigned to an administrative assignment, in plain clothes, with limited citizen interaction while on *restricted duty*. Any employee, whether on or off duty, involved in an officer-involved shooting, shall immediately be placed on *restricted duty*.

1 DIVISION COMMANDERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Division commanders shall be held accountable for ensuring that this General Order is followed and that the *Post-Critical Incident Checklist* form is completed. The *Post-Critical Incident Checklist* form is available on the department's Intranet Portal. These documents provide a framework for the procedures and the resources in place to promote employees' well-being and their return to full duty. In addition, the commander shall ensure that communication and collaboration between the commander, employees, and the divisions responsible for the assistance to the employees are appropriate and complete.

2 DUTY STATUS

Restricted Duty Status

Division commanders may authorize *restricted duty* status for any employee exposed to a *critical incident*, if it is in the best interest of the employee or the department. Any employee, whether on or off duty, involved in an officer-involved shooting, shall immediately be placed on *restricted duty* by the employee's division commander.

Officers on *restricted duty* shall be restricted to administrative assignments with limited citizen interaction. These assignments are intended to provide an opportunity for officers to obtain emotional and psychological support and other assistance. During *restricted duty* status officers shall also obtain refresher training and debrief with the Training Division's Patrol Tactics Unit. *Restricted duty* status is in no way punitive, but intended to protect the well-being of the employee.

Relieved of Duty Status

The Chief of Police, or designee, may order an employee relieved of duty if it is in the best interest of the employee or the department. If the employee is to be relieved of duty, the relief of duty and return to duty shall be handled by the Internal Affairs Division (IAD) in accordance with the guidelines set forth in General Order 200-03, **Investigation of Employee Misconduct**.

Extra Employment Restrictions

An employee shall not work any police-related extra employment during the entire period of *restricted duty* status.

3 POST-CRITICAL INCIDENT INTERVENTION

If an employee, whether on or off duty, is directly involved in an incident resulting in death or serious injury to another person, the employee shall contact the Psychological Services Division within two business days to schedule a *post-critical incident intervention* session. The employee's appointment shall be no later than one week after the date of the *critical incident*. Additionally, an in-person follow-up session with the Psychological Services Division is required between 40 to 50 *calendar days* after a *critical incident*.

Employees who are injured in a *critical incident* shall call for an appointment with the Psychological Services Division upon or before returning to duty. Employees are not required to wait until returning to duty and are encouraged to call as soon as possible after the *critical incident*.

Additionally, the Psychological Services Division provides *post-critical incident intervention* sessions for employees indirectly exposed to a *critical incident*. Employees are encouraged to call the Psychological Services Division for an appointment if they are indirectly exposed to such an incident. Attendance at these sessions is not mandatory for employees, unless a supervisor determines it is in the best interest of the employee.

A department psychologist shall immediately notify an employee's division commander and the Administrative Personnel Committee (APC) should it be determined through a *post-critical incident intervention* session that the employee should be on or remain on *restricted duty* status.

A *post-critical incident intervention* is separate and distinct from a *fitness-for-duty evaluation*. This does not preclude supervisors and other employees from notifying APC regarding concerns about any employee's ability to perform the employee's job due to medical, physical, or psychological conditions as directed in General Order 300-05, **Workers' Compensation**.

Attendance

Employees shall be allowed to attend mandatory *post-critical incident intervention* sessions while on duty. If an employee must attend the mandatory session(s) during off-duty hours, the employee shall be given overtime compensation (or flextime if applicable) for the actual time spent in the session. The Psychological Services Division shall provide the employee written documentation of attendance at mandatory session(s). The employee shall give the documentation to the employee's division commander.

Attendance to subsequent or other non-mandatory sessions at the Psychological Services Division is confidential information and documentation of such sessions attended shall require a written and signed release from the employee.

4 TRAINING

As part of the *post-critical incident* review process, the division commander is responsible to ensure that the employee attends *post-critical incident* training at the Training Division.

Officers assigned to the Narcotics Tactical Team and the Tactical Operations Division SWAT Detail shall attend their respective division's post-critical incident training.

5 RETURN TO DUTY

An employee's return to duty from *restricted duty* shall only be authorized by the Chief of Police or designee. The division commander shall notify the Chief of Police, in writing through the chain of command, that the employee has completed the mandated requirements as outlined in this General Order. Before seeking an officer's return to duty, the employee's division commander,

or designee, shall consult with the Psychological Services Division and the Training Division regarding the employee's status for return to full duty. The completed *Post-Critical Incident Checklist* form will be placed in the employee's Division Personnel File when it is returned with the Chief of Police or designee's signature.

The employee's division commander, or designee, shall ensure the returning employee is integrated back into the work environment. The returning employee shall be assigned to work with another employee for a period to be determined by the division commander and the Psychological Services Division. This time period shall be no fewer than five workdays. The returning employee may continue to work with another employee at the direction of the division commander or Psychological Services.



Troy Finner
Chief of Police