

**SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT  
PROCEDURE**

**DATE:** December 9, 2016

**NUMBER:** 5.21 – HUMAN RESOURCES

**SUBJECT:** CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING PROTOCOL

**RELATED POLICY:** N/A

**ORIGINATING DIVISION:** WELLNESS UNIT

**NEW PROCEDURE:**

**PROCEDURAL CHANGE:**

**SUPERSEDES:** DP 5.21 – 02/09/2012

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**I. PURPOSE**

This Department procedure establishes guidelines for critical incident debriefings following critical or traumatic incidents.

**II. SCOPE**

This procedure applies to all members of the Department.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Critical/traumatic Incident – normally, a single incident that causes the experience of unusually strong emotional reactions, such as an officer-involved shooting or any police action that results in death or serious injury to police personnel or citizens.
- B. Critical Incident Debriefing – a confidential psycho-educational intervention designed to inform persons who have experienced a traumatic incident of the psychological and physiological effects of stress and to delineate effective coping strategies. It is normally a group meeting facilitated by Psychological Services and attended by all police personnel directly involved in the incident. Critical incident debriefings may be conducted on an individual basis instead of, or in addition to, group debriefings.

#### IV. PROCEDURES

NEW

- A. Upon notification of a critical/traumatic incident, the Watch Commander's Office will notify the on-duty Wellness Unit Sergeant, who will assess the need for Peer Support. If needed, Peer Support will be dispatched to the appropriate location.
- B. The Wellness Unit Captain or Sergeant will notify Psychological Services of the incident and request that a psychologist respond to the incident, as appropriate.
- C. Within 24 hours of a critical/traumatic incident, other than officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths, Wellness Unit, Peer Support, Psychological Services, and the appropriate command staff will assess the need for conducting a critical incident debriefing.
- D. If the incident is an officer-involved shooting or an in-custody death, the Wellness Unit will provide Psychological Services with the names of all police personnel involved at the scene or working in Communications Division at the time of the incident. The Wellness Unit and Psychological Services will be responsible for contacting the involved police personnel within 24 hours and for scheduling a confidential, group, mandatory critical incident debriefing. Police personnel will be strongly encouraged by Psychological Services to schedule a confidential counseling appointment for individual debriefing.
- E. Psychological Services will conduct follow-up critical incident debriefings as needed. Psychological Services will be required to make a minimum of three contacts with each individual at one-week, one-month, and six-month intervals.