



SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL MANUAL



Procedure 921 – Psychological Services

Office with Primary Responsibility:	CTA	Effective Date:	January 4, 2023
Office(s) with Secondary Responsibilities:	PSC, PNC, TSC, STC, MCC	Prior Revision Date:	July 24, 2015
Forms Referenced in Procedure:	None	Number of Pages:	5
		Related Procedures:	None

.01 INTRODUCTION

This procedure provides officers with an understanding of the psychological services available to individual officers and their families.

.02 DISCUSSION

The San Antonio Police Department recognizes the importance of the mental and emotional health of its employees. It also recognizes the many stresses placed on officers by the job they perform and the toll those stresses take on the emotional and behavioral well-being of officers. To help decrease the impact of excessive stress, the Department has a Psychological Services Office prepared to support the psychological needs of its officers and their families through evaluation, counseling, and consultation.

.03 TERMINOLOGY (For specific use within this procedure, see Glossary)

Consultation	Counseling	Critical Stress Incident	Evaluation
Mental Health Leave	Mental Health Professional	Stress	Traumatic Leave

.04 AVAILABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

A. Evaluations

1. The Psychological Services Office provides psychological evaluations to officers of the Department and their immediate families.
2. Voluntary evaluations may be conducted at the request of an officer or an officer's immediate family. Voluntary evaluations include, but are not limited to, assessments of the following:
 - a. An officer's stress level.
 - b. An officer's or family member's non-job related emotional, cognitive, or behavioral functioning issue; and
 - c. An officer's neuropsychological integrity following a head injury.
3. Appointments for voluntary evaluations may be made by calling the Psychological Services Office at 207-2180.
4. Non-mandatory evaluations may be requested by an officer's supervisor when there is a noticeable change in an officer's on-the-job performance. Some of the factors that may be taken into consideration are as follows:
 - a. An increase in the use of sick leave;
 - b. An increase in the number of citizen complaints;
 - c. Frequently reporting late for work;



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- d. An increase in sarcastic or abusive remarks toward fellow officers;
 - e. Withdrawal from other officers;
 - f. A decline in personal appearance;
 - g. A decrease in impulse control;
 - h. A decrease in productivity; or
 - i. A decrease in the quality of an officer's written reports.
5. Mandatory evaluations may be ordered by the Chief of Police to determine an officer's fitness for duty or emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral suitability for police work. The evaluations may be for, but not limited to, any of the following incidents:
- a. Any loss of life or serious bodily injury as a result of an officer's actions;
 - b. Police involved shootings;
 - c. Fatality incidents;
 - d. Fatality crashes involving officers;
 - e. The death of an officer;
 - f. Officers involved in critical incidents;
 - g. Officers involved in family disturbance/violence incidents;
 - h. Substance abuse, or
 - i. Report/complaints of criminal wrongdoing; or
 - j. Report/complaints of significant behavioral infractions.

B. Counseling

1. The Psychological Services Office provides psychological counseling services to officers of the Department and their families who are experiencing problems in any of the following areas (including but not limited to):
 - a. Substance abuse;
 - b. Depression;
 - c. Suicidal thoughts;
 - d. Physical problems related to stress;
 - e. Panic attacks;



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- f. Temper control problems;
 - g. Family conflicts;
 - h. Eating disorders; or
 - i. Smoking habits.
2. Requests for counseling may be made by self-referral, a family member, or an officer's supervisor.
3. Officers may be ordered to counseling by the Chief if the member is involved in a family disturbance/violence incident.
- C. Consultations
- 1. Any supervisory or command officer may consult with the Psychological Services Office on supervisory, operational, or organizational issues.
 - 2. Supervisory officers are encouraged to consult with a staff psychologist prior to counseling an officer due to noticeable changes in the officer's behavior. The staff psychologist should be able to advise the supervisor regarding the importance of the officer's behavioral changes, methods of approaching the officer, and the need for Psychological Services Office intervention.
 - 3. The Psychological Services Office provides consultation services to any unit concerned with the application of psychological knowledge to the development of organizational effectiveness. Included in the appropriate organizational issues for the Psychological Services Office are the following:
 - a. Validation of the assessment and selection process of personnel; and
 - b. The application of psychology in the investigative process.

.05 CONFIDENTIALITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

- A. All voluntary and non-mandatory evaluations and counseling are confidential information, unless the staff psychologist determines an immediate threat exists to an officer or other party (in such cases, the staff psychologist has a duty to intervene to save lives), or if required by law or subpoenaed by a Judge's order.
- B. Mandatory evaluations and counseling are not considered confidential information. The officer subjected to mandatory evaluation or counseling shall cooperate fully with the staff psychologist and understand the information discussed will be shared with the Office of the Chief.

.06 MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE POLICY

- A. This Mental Health Leave Policy is in accordance with Chapter 614, Subchapter A-1 of the Texas Government Code
- B. Traumatic event – an event which occurs in the peace officer(s) scope of employment when the officer is involved in the response to, or investigation of, an event that causes the officer to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function during or after the incident. Traumatic events may include, but are not limited to, the following:



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1. Major disasters which may include response to weather related events involving multiple casualties; or explosions with multiple casualties; or search and recovery missions involving multiple casualties;
 2. Incidents involving multiple casualties which may include shootings or traffic accidents;
 3. Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
 4. Death of a child resulting from violence or neglect;
 5. Officer(s) involved shooting of a person, not covered under any other policy/procedure.
- C. Requesting mental health leave
1. An officer directly involved in a traumatic event may request the use of mental health leave. The request shall be made in writing through the chain of command. The request shall be treated as a priority matter and a decision on the granting of the leave shall be made no later than 24 hours following the submission of the request. The request shall be granted unless the chain of command can articulate specific compelling reasons to deny granting the leave.
 2. A supervisor or coworker who becomes aware of behavioral changes in an officer directly involved in a traumatic event should suggest to the officer that he or she seek mental health leave and the assistance of a mental health professional.
- D. Confidentiality of request
1. Any request for mental health leave shall be treated as strictly confidential by all parties involved and shall not be discussed or disclosed outside the officer's immediate chain of command, and only as necessary to facilitate the use of the leave. Any officer or supervisor who becomes aware of behavioral changes and suggests the officer seek mental health leave shall not discuss that matter with any third party. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.
 2. Confidentiality may be waived by the officer seeking mental health leave. Confidentiality may be waived under circumstances which indicate the officer is a danger to himself or herself or others and department personnel must confer with mental health professionals.
- E. Duration of mental health leave
1. An officer directly involved in a traumatic event may request up to three working days of mental health leave.
 2. Extensions of mental health leave may be available under certain circumstances. Any request for an extension shall be accompanied by documentation from a mental health professional who is counseling the officer. The request may extend the leave by three working days. Each officer may request no more than two extensions, each supported by sufficient documentation by the mental health professional. The Chief shall grant the extension(s) upon the receipt of sufficient documentation explain the need for the extension.
- F. Mental health services available to officers:
1. See Section **.04 above**.
 2. [Officer Wellness Program](#) under the Mental Health Unit



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3. [SAPD Peer Support Program](#)
 4. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- G. Applying for Mental Health Leave
1. Mental Health Leave Requests are submitted to the Chief of Staff's office for approval.
 2. Sworn Members shall utilize the [Mental Health Leave Request](#) form to request leave.
 - a. Members must complete the entire form for consideration.
 3. The form is automatically submitted to the Chief of Staff's office and a determination shall be made within 24 hours.
 - a. Members will be notified of the outcome. If approved their chain of command will be sent the appropriate leave orders. If the request is denied, the member shall be given specific reasons why the leave was not granted. Instructions for requesting an extension will be sent with the initial approval.
 4. Up to two (2), three (3) day extensions may be requested with the proper supporting documentation from a Mental Health Professional. Extension Requests should be made to the Chief of Staff's office in person or by phone so the requesting member may submit the supporting documentation.