

**CITIZENS' LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEW BOARD
POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

EXPANSION OF SDSD FAMILY LIAISON PROTOCOL

BACKGROUND:

In August 2019, the San Diego Sheriff's Department (SDSD) instituted a Family Liaison program and detailed its responsibilities in Policies and Procedures (P&P) Section 6.134 entitled, "Family Liaison Protocol." The Policy Section is as follows:

The Sheriff's Department has established a Family Liaison protocol. The goal of the Family Liaison is to effectively communicate with the family of the involved subject who has been involved in a shooting, use of force with deputies where significant injury or death occurs, or an in-custody death. The families of these individuals are often left with unanswered questions during an exceptionally difficult and emotionally-charged time. The Family Liaison will work closely with family members and be a departmental point of contact. The Family Liaison will answer questions and follow up on requests for assistance, while conforming to confidentiality laws and respecting privacy rights; in addition to maintaining the integrity of the investigation. The affected Station/Facility Commander or designee shall become the departmental liaison to the deceased or injured suspect's family.



There is no specific mandate that the Family Liaison meet with family members at the conclusion of the investigation into the death. CLERB understands that legal action is pursued in many situations involving a shooting, use of force resulting in significant injury or death, or in-custody death. Regardless of this fact, it is also true that family members deserve answers and should not have to pursue legal action against the County to get them. As the SDSD policy statement indicates, these family members are often left with unanswered questions during an "exceptionally difficult and emotionally-charged time." In addition, the procedures acknowledge that family members should not only be treated with dignity, compassion, and assistance but also as a deputy would like to be treated under similar circumstances.

CLERB believes that many times, family members simply want answers, no matter the circumstances, justified or not, surrounding a shooting, use of force resulting in significant injury or death, or an in-custody death. CLERB also believes that family members deserve those answers and contends that establishing, maintaining, and nurturing open lines of communication will not only result in the provision of well-deserved compassionate service to grieving community members but may begin to bridge the gap in law enforcement/community relations and actually reduce liability in the process.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION:

Pursuant to Section 340.9(g) of the San Diego County Administrative Code, the Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB) shall have the authority to review and make recommendations on policies and procedures of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department and San Diego County Probation Department. As such, CLERB makes the following policy recommendations to the SDSD:

1. It is recommended that the SDSD update P&P Section 6.134 entitled, "Family Liaison Protocol," to mandate that the Family Liaison, or designee, meet with the family at the conclusion of the investigation into a shooting, use of force resulting in significant injury or death, or an in-custody death. The purpose of the meeting will be to advise the family of the investigative outcome, answer questions, and provide information when appropriate. As currently stated in the P&P, when information cannot be released, the family will be provided with an explanation, follow-up, or referrals to appropriate agencies.

Submitted by: 	Date: 04-07-22	Reviewed by: 	Date: 04-07-22
Paul R. Parker III, Executive Officer		Lynn Setzler, Supervising Special Investigator	