

Critical Incident - Communication & Outreach

302.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Vallejo Police Department recognizes the importance of maintaining transparency in public service by engaging the community concerning enforcement actions. The Department seeks to build on its partnership with the community, fostering trust through collaboration, communication, optimum information-sharing and the solicitation of input into its review processes and improvement. To this end, the department will continue to engage and liaise with the media to ensure open dissemination of information regarding departmental activities.

Following an officer involved shooting (OIS) or other critical incident involving the death of a person arising out of the actions of an officer, the police department will share information and hold a meeting in the community to provide up-to-date information about the incident, allow for public comments, answer questions and provide timelines for the dissemination of related information from future developments.

Key to transparency, the police department has established this policy to ensure open communication with the family of individuals killed or seriously injured arising out an incident involving a department member. In these cases, the Family Liaison will contact the family members of a decedent suspect/citizen and provide a direct point of contact for the family

302.2 MEDIA COMMUNICATION

Initial Press Briefing

Following an officer involved shooting (OIS) or other critical incident involving the death of a person associated with the actions of an officer, the procedures in this policy will initiate. The Public Information Officer (PIO) and Professional Standards Division (PSD) Sergeant will respond to the scene as soon as practicable. The PIO will coordinate the media staging area and communicate the location information to the media via email and the VPD website and other social media platforms.

As time permits during the initial response to the scene and following, it will be the PSD's responsibility to monitor social media feeds for any potential evidence captured of the incident. Any such content will be brought to the attention of the Professional Standards Division Commander and Investigations Division Commander.

Following a briefing with Command Staff and Investigations personnel close to the case, the initial press briefing shall be conducted by the Chief of Police or their designee within three hours of the incident. The press briefing shall be limited to factual information known at the time. During the initial press briefing the department will identify the time and location of the Town Hall Meeting. The PIO shall be responsible for identifying and coordinating the date and time for the Town Hall Community Meetings and any release of names of employees involved in the critical incident.

Press Release Updates

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After the initial press briefing, the PIO will be responsible for preparing a press release containing the currently known, factual information. Once the press release is approved by the PSD Lieutenant as required, it shall be distributed to the media via email and posted to VPD's webpage and social media platforms. The PIO will be the initial point of contact for any media inquiry. VPD staff will forward all inquiries regarding a critical incident to the PIO.

Within the first week of the incident, as additional information is developed, press release updates shall be issued without delay. It will be the responsibility of the PIO to publish the subsequent press releases which shall be limited to factual information known at the time. The Department shall issue monthly press releases updating the community on the status of open critical incidents. Court actions will be posted as they occur. The PIO and Professional Standards Sergeant will consult with the Investigation team prior to press releases to consider current and critical investigative phases (arrests and charging) and the sharing of as much information as possible in the update. These press release updates shall include the date, time and location of the incidents, the entities still conducting ongoing investigations and provide contact numbers for investigating agencies. Once the press releases are approved as required by the PSD Lieutenant, they shall be distributed to the media via email and posted to the Department's webpage and social media platforms. The Professional Standards Lieutenant shall oversee the release of updated information for the duration of open critical incident investigations.

302.3 FAMILY LIAISON

Following an OIS or other critical incident involving the death or serious bodily injury of a person arising out the actions of a Vallejo police officer, the Investigations Bureau Commander will ensure that a Family Liaison (FL) is immediately assigned to facilitate open communication and transparency with the family and will be included in all media coordination meetings. The FL will be a trained member of the chaplain group who will be contacted as part of the initial notifications following an incident described in this policy.

The FL will be present for the initial next of kin notification with the Solano County Sheriff's Office following an incident and will be responsible for maintaining contact with the affected family throughout the investigation and charging process. The FL will provide support, information regarding the investigative process, updated information and be accessible to answer questions from family members. The FL will not be able to provide confidential investigative information but will act as a coordinator between the family and the investigators, including the Solano County investigators.

The FL will make contact with the affected family at least weekly after the initial meeting until the family states there is no further need for weekly contact by the Liaison. Contact will then be made at least monthly for the duration of the official investigations and inquiries by the family into the incident.

The FL will work with the family to arrange a meeting with the Police Chief immediately following the incident. Generally, the Chief of Police will meet with the family within 72 hours of the incident at a mutually available time and location. The goal is to demonstrate the personal

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commitment to department accountability, explain the actions to come including an independent investigation(s) into the incident and acknowledge the loss experienced by the family during a difficult an emotionally-charged time. Only in the event of an emergency will the Chief of Police designate a different command-level representative to take responsibility for this initial meeting with the affected families.

The Investigations Bureau Commander will be responsible for ensuring the FL has access to the Investigations Bureau personnel for proper coordination of, and access to, information relevant updates and other information for the family and to answer questions as they arise. The Investigations Bureau Commander will include the Family Liaison in the monthly staff meetings and media coordination meetings to ensure any new information be made available and to facilitate transparency.

The Professional Standards Lieutenant will be responsible for ensuring the FL has access to the PIO or appropriate Professional Standards staff for any additional information sharing coordination that would not otherwise come from the Investigations Bureau. Prior to any press release, the PIO will ensure timely notification to the FL who will notify the family ahead of the release. The Department will strive to ensure timely and consistent information to the public and affected family.

302.4 TOWN HALL COMMUNITY MEETINGS

A Town Hall Community Meeting shall be held within 14 days of an OIS or other critical incident involving the death or serious bodily injury of a person arising out the actions of an officer. The meeting shall be held as near to the community affected by the incident as practicable.

The Investigations Bureau Commander will assume the overall responsibility of the Town Hall Community Meetings, including the release of all available factual information related to the incident and consistent with the law.

The Chief of Police will attend the Town Hall Community Meeting to represent the Department as part of the panel with the Professional Standards Unit, PIO, a City executive from the City Manager's Office and at least one supervisory member of the Investigations Unit with information regarding the incident under investigation. The Investigation Bureau personnel shall be designated to provide information regarding the incident and facilitate the questions, comments and responses in the meeting.

The PIO shall coordinate the announcement of the Town Hall Community Meeting including the date, time, location. Announcements shall be made no more than 7 days before the Town Hall on the VPD and City website as well as the City's social media platforms. Included in the publicizing of the meeting will be an agenda that establishes time during the meeting for questions and comments from community members to be addressed by the panel. The Department website will publish the meeting and solicit questions from members of the community who cannot attend, to be answered in coordination with the release of its information during the meeting.

Information that will be shared at the meeting includes:

- Known information regarding the incident

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- The involved officers' names and assignments
- Body-worn camera video and audio
- Other known surveillance video
- Future communication plans and timing

Within three business days following the Town Hall Community Meeting, the Professional Standards Unit Sergeant will coordinate with City IT to publish the meeting on the VPD website allowing access for those community members who could not attend.

Within three business days following the Town Hall Community Meeting, the Professional Standards Unit and PIO shall meet to review the outcome with the goal of replicating good practice and addressing opportunities to improve. The PIO shall identify any specific action items necessary to adjust for future Town Hall Community Meetings. These will be forwarded to the Captain with oversight of the Professional Standards Unit within three business days of the review meeting. The Professional Standards Division Lieutenant will be responsible for completion of the action items and follow-up to the Captain about their completion.

302.5 RELEASE OF VIDEO RECORDINGS

The Department is committed to release of video evidence as soon as possible in furtherance of the purpose and intent of this policy including increased transparency, public trust, thorough information sharing and community engagement.

Video evidence in the possession of VPD for a critical incident shall be released to the community within 14 days of the knowledge of its existence. Whereas the existence of body worn camera (BWC) video will be known almost immediately following a critical incident, neighborhood or bystander video may not come to the attention of Department in a timely manner.

BWC video will be published on the Department website. Video recordings generally will be released without alterations or editing. Any enhancement or explanatory features to a video being released will be identified. If any legal restrictions apply, including redactions, these will also be noted at the time the video is released. It will be the responsibility of the Professional Standards Lieutenant to monitor and ensure the release of video evidence in accordance with this policy.

While Department's focus is on the sharing of video evidence with the community and stakeholders as soon as possible, an assessment will be made prior to the release of video evidence that takes into consideration the following:

- The officer(s), family member(s) and involved persons being notified in advance of the decision to make a release.
- Necessary limitations pursuant to AB 748.

The decision to delay release of recordings based on the above criteria will be made by the Investigation Bureau Commander with approval from the Chief of Police.

Public Education of Release Process

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The release of BWC recordings can assist with increased transparency as part of contemporaneous information sharing, corroborating evidence, and/or quicker resolution for questions of fact. However, a video recording is only one piece of evidence collected and not a singularly inclusive piece of evidence.

The Professional Standards staff and PIO will prepare educational materials on the release process of BWC recordings for publication to the community and internal stakeholders via the Department website. The publication will be archived with the other website publications retained into history. Members will receive the education training via the automated internal training software which logs the completion of all training required and completed by its members.

302.6 CONTINUITY & COMMUNICATION INTEGRITY

At the close of cases falling under this protocol policy, the PIO will be responsible for distributing the engagement survey to the community for continued feedback to ensure strategy goals in communication are being met. The community will have access to the survey via the VPD website and social media platforms for two weeks.

Following analysis of the feedback by the PIO and Professional Standards Sergeant, Professional Standards Division will meet with the supervising Captain or Deputy Chief to consider recommending any potential protocol changes within policy for continued improvement.

As part of the ongoing effort for continuous review and improvement of overall transparency and information, communication and coordination of the Family Liaison program will also be evaluated. At the conclusion of each applicable case, the review of effectiveness of the communication to, and coordination with, the family relative to the investigation information and media relations will be completed by the CIRB. Focus shall be on whether the program goals for transparency, support and communication have been met and whether there are any opportunities for improvement. Metrics to be measured will include whether or not the Department was successful in engaging the family timely and consistently. Any Family Liaison program improvements recommended by the CIRB will be forwarded to the Investigations Bureau Commander for implementation.

Press releases, updates, surveys and feedback related to information-sharing in compliance with this policy will be saved in each of the related PSD tracking software case files.

[See attachment: Critical Incident Checklist Policy 302 052523.pdf](#)

Attachments

Critical Incident Checklist Policy 302 052523.pdf

Investigation Bureau Critical Incident Checklist

Day of Incident

- ☐ Dispatch called-out notifications list, including Family Liaison (IBC)
- ☐ Coordinate Media Staging Area at scene (PIO)
- ☐ Monitor social media (PSD)
- ☐ Briefing by Investigation personnel with Command Staff and PIO (PSD Sgt or LT)
- ☐ Initial press briefing within 1 hour of media staging (C.O.P)
 - ☐ Date and time of incident
 - ☐ Location
 - ☐ Why VPD was originally at the scene of the incident/type of call
 - ☐ How many people were shot/killed/injured and whether police or community members
 - ☐ Any weapon recovered at scene
 - ☐ Who will be investigating other than VPD into the initial crime
 - ☐ Officer name(s) and assignment(s) if factually established that:
 - ☐ Their weapon was fired at the incident
 - ☐ Not still currently on scene
 - ☐ No credible threat to specific officers' safety
 - ☐ Subject demographics
 - ☐ Subject name if fingerprints validated or VPD knows from prior contacts that identity cannot be mistaken
 - ☐ More information to be released as it becomes available
 - ☐ Next press release in 3 hours published on VPD website
- ☐ Confirm Date and Location of Town Hall Meeting (PIO)
Date: _____
Location: _____
- ☐ First written press release within 4 hours (PIO)
 - ☐ Include all information from initial press briefing (see above) and additional related details that have since been obtained
 - ☐ Update on numbers of injured/shot/killed and health status update
 - ☐ Town Hall meeting date and vicinity location
 - ☐ POC for any known information
 - ☐ If needed, make plea for witnesses to contact POC with information
 - ☐ Any information not able to release provide ETA for release
- ☐ Community Police Review Commission notified (PIO)
- ☐ Independent Police Auditor notified (PIO)
- ☐ City Council notified (PIO)

Within 7 calendar days of Incident

- ☐ Process improvement meeting post-C.O.P. family meeting (IBC)
- ☐ THM Location as near to where the incident occurred as possible (PIO)

- ☐ THM Adequate seating (PIO)
- ☐ THM Confirm Time & Location of Town Hall Meeting (PIO)
 - ☐ Location: _____ Time: _____
- ☐ THM Sound system items, visual assistance, recording and related equipment provided to venue as needed for questions and comments from the public (IT, Facilities)
- Items needed: _____
- ☐ Date, Time & Location of Town Hall Community Meeting published on all related correspondence following original announcement (PIO)
 - ☐ VPD Website
 - ☐ VPD Facebook page
 - ☐ VPD Twitter account
 - ☐ VPD Instagram account
 - ☐ Press email distribution address
- ☐ Language interpreters confirmed (PIO)
- ☐ Hold briefing with Investigations and formulate talking points and agenda, as well visual aids needed for Town Hall Meeting including body-worn camera (BWC) or other surveillance footage (PIO, Command Staff member, PSD Lieutenant, Investigations Division Commander)
- ☐ The following points are agendaized for sharing: (IBC)
 - ☐ Current known facts
 - ☐ Involved officers' names (unless threat assessment determined this poses specific threat to involved officers' safety – then ETA of the information shall be shared instead)
 - ☐ Body-worn camera recordings
 - ☐ Other known surveillance video
 - ☐ Investigating entities (other than VPD)
- ☐ Agenda drafted and finalized (PIO)
 - ☐ Includes questions and comments from public to Panel
- ☐ Script completed (IBC)
- ☐ Meeting publicized on VPD website, social media, and press distribution list upon confirmation (PIO)
- ☐ VPD Goals & Vision published on all information releases (PSD Sergeant)
- ☐ Coordinate Visual Aids (PIO):
 - Photos (Crime lab/evidence): _____
 - Map Images (Crime Analysis): _____
- ☐ Assign BWC for redaction (Investigations Sgt)

- ☐ Information to be released at meeting reviewed by IBC (IBC)
- ☐ Information includes known facts of the incident, involved officers' names, available body-worn camera video and audio as well as other known surveillance video (IBC)
- ☐ Police Chief attending on panel (C.O.P)
- ☐ CMO representative on panel (CMO)
- ☐ Investigator on panel (Investigations Sgt)
- ☐ Family Liaison included in all investigation update meetings and media coordination meetings (IBC)

One to Two Days before Town Hall Meeting

- ☐ Meet with family of subject to review information to be shared at Town Hall Meeting (Family Liaison)
- ☐ Confirm visual aids are prepared (PSD Sgt)
- ☐ Confirm sound and equipment is prepared for location venue (PIO)
- ☐ Confirm BWC footage to be shared is properly redacted (IBC)
- ☐ Confirm the timeline and circumstances of the incident have not changed with additional information (Investigations Sgt)