



<b>SECTION: HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	<b>REFERENCE NUMBER: A25</b>
<b>SUBJECT: MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE FOR PEACE OFFICERS</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/03/2024</b>
<b>FROM: DR. CRYSTAL CALDERA, CITY MANAGER</b>	<b>LAST REVISION DATE: 09/01/2021</b>

**A. PURPOSE**

The City of Leon Valley's goal is to develop and adopt a policy allowing the use of mental health leave by a peace officer employed by the City who experiences a traumatic event in the scope of employment. Mental health leave will support staff in maintaining a healthy state of mind while at work and at home. The City of Leon Valley recognizes mental health is just as important as maintaining physical health. The City supports establishing a workplace that is comfortable, healthy, safe, and supportive. This policy is required under SB 1359 and in compliance with Texas Government Code Chapter 614, Subchapter A-1.

**B. DEFINITIONS**

1. City - The City of Leon Valley is a political subdivision of the state authorized to employ peace officers.
2. Mental Health Leave - Administrative leave with pay granted in response to a traumatic event that occurred in the scope of the peace officer's employment.
3. Mental Health Professional – a licensed social or mental health worker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist.
4. Peace Officer - An individual having met all requirements established by law and possessing the necessary licenses under the law; completed the basic licensing course; the state licensing examination; and thereafter having been appointed by the Leon Valley Police Department to serve as an officer. The term “peace officer” is used interchangeably throughout this policy with the terms “officer” and “employee”.
5. Traumatic event – An event which occurs in the peace officer(s) scope of employment when the officer is involved in response to, or investigation of, an event that causes the officer to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which results in an adverse effect on the mental health of a peace officer, resulting in the documented need for mental health leave.

6. The use of mental health leave may be granted after a peace officer experiences a traumatic event in the course and scope of employment. Traumatic events may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. 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;
  - b. Incidents involving multiple casualties, which may include shootings or traffic crashes;
  - c. Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
  - d. Death of a child resulting from violence or neglect; and/or
  - e. Officer(s) involved shooting.

### **C. RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Requesting Mental Health Leave
  - a. An officer directly involved in a traumatic event while in the course and scope of employment may request the use of mental health leave. The request shall be made in writing through the chain of command.
  - b. 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.
  - c. The request shall be granted unless the chain of command can articulate specific, compelling reason(s) to deny granting the leave.
  - d. 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 care professional.
2. Confidentiality of Request
  - a. 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.
  - b. Confidentiality may be waived by the officer seeking mental health leave or under circumstances that indicate the officer is a danger to himself or herself or others and department personnel must confer with mental health professionals.
  - c. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.

### 3. Duration of Mental Health Leave

- a. An officer directly involved in a traumatic event may request up to three (3) working days of mental health leave.
- b. Extensions of mental health leave may be available under certain circumstances.
- c. Any request for an extension shall be accompanied by documentation from a mental health professional who is counseling the officer.
- d. The request may extend the leave by three (3) working days.
- e. An officer may request no more than two extensions, each supported by sufficient documentation by the mental health professional.
- f. The Chief shall grant the extension(s) upon the receipt of sufficient documentation explaining the need for the extension.
- g. The City of Leon Valley will not reduce a peace officer's sick leave balance, vacation leave balance, or other paid leave balance in connection with paid mental health leave taken in accordance with this policy.

### 4. Available Mental Health Services and Resources

- a. The City's Employee Assistance Program is included with the employee's BCBS of Texas insurance plan under ComPsych Guidance Resources – Call Toll Free: 844-213-8968, Download the App: Guidance Now, Web ID: BCBSTXEAP, Website: [guidanceresources.com](http://guidanceresources.com).
- b. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7 service via a tollfree at 1-800-273- TALK (8255) or you can reach the Suicie & Crisis Lifeline by Calling or Texting 988, or using the chatbox at [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org), or you can also text "MHA" to 741-741 to reach the Crisis Text Line.

## **D. PROCEDURE**

When such a traumatic event does occur while in the course and scope of employment, it is important for management staff to recognize the fact that some employees may be negatively affected and need to be away from work to appropriately process the traumatic incident and perhaps seek mental health assistance from a professional. In addition, it is important to provide support for employees.

1. The employee must make the request for mental health leave in writing through the chain of command; an e-mail will suffice.

2. The Employee should immediately call a mental health care professional. The City provides each Employee with access to our Employee Assistance Provider through BlueCrossBlueShield.
3. A note from a medical health professional needs to be provided within within three (3) days of the request.
4. The approval of the request can only be made by a rank of Sergeant and above. If any other rank receives a request such as Corporal's or Officer's in Charge, they must immediately forward their request to their Sergeant. Denials of a request can only be made by the Police Chief.
5. The granting of the leave shall be made no later than 24 hours following the submission of the request.
6. All requests should be forwarded to the Human Resources Office for appropriate payroll documentation.
7. Any request for extension shall be made by the Chief upon the receipt of sufficient documentation explaining the need for the extension.

## **AVAILABLE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES & RESOURCES**

**City's Employee Assistance Program  
BCBSTX Network Benefits  
ComPsych Guidance Resources  
1-844-213-8968**

**Register Online: [www.guidanceresources.com](http://www.guidanceresources.com)**

**or**

**Download the App: Guidance Now  
Web ID: BCBSTXEAP**

**The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273- TALK (8255) or 800-SUICIDE  
Call or Text 988 or chatbox at 988lifeline.org  
Text "MHA" to 741-741 for text line.**

**MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE FOR PEACE OFFICERS**



**BlueCross BlueShield**  
of Texas



## Get to Know Your Employee Assistance Program

**Find professional support when you  
need it for challenging life events.**

ComPsych GuidanceResources is an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) included with your Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas plan. You and your family members have access to a suite of EAP services — no copays or deductibles attached.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, a Division of Health Care Service Corporation,  
a Mutual Legal Reserve Company, an independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

### Connect with the EAP Today!

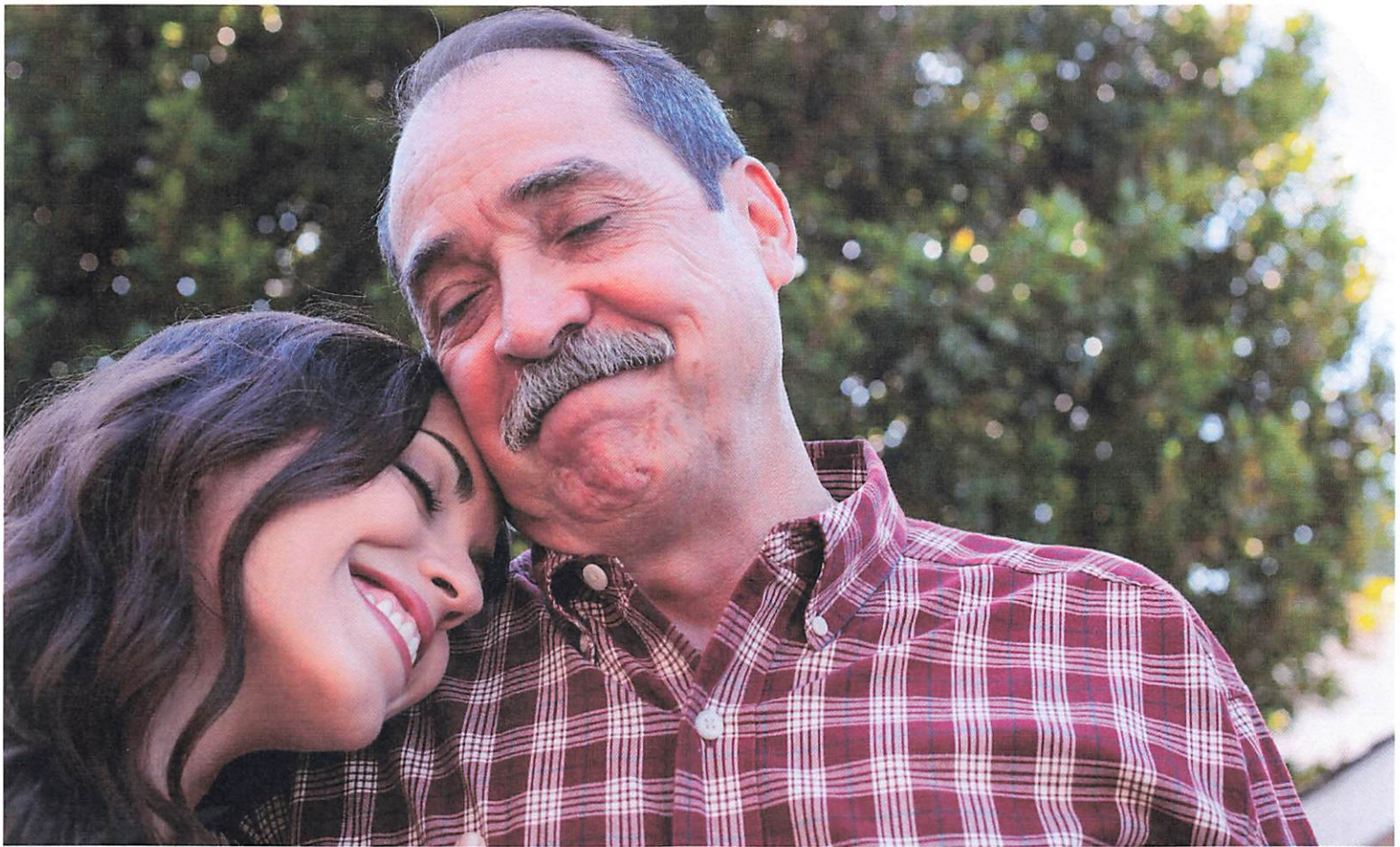
Don't be afraid to reach out for help. Your personal records are kept private from your employer, as required by law.



- Call: **844-213-8968**
- Online: **[guidanceresources.com](https://www.guidanceresources.com)**
- App: **GuidanceNow**
- Web ID: **BCBSTXEAP**

**COMPSYCH**  
GuidanceResources™ Worldwide





### **Make a Positive Change**

Connect with a therapist for confidential emotional support. A trained mental health professional can counsel you through a variety of concerns, such as:

- Sadness, worry and stress
- Alcohol or drug use
- Grief, loss and personal struggles
- Personal relationship issues

Your EAP benefit includes five free therapy sessions per issue. Once you've used these free sessions, you can transition to your BCBSTX network benefits and keep seeing the same therapist in most cases.

### **Check Off Your To-dos**

ComPsych GuidanceResources specialists can save you time by searching for local, professional services so you don't have to. They can help you find:

- Child, elder or pet care
- Movers or home repair services
- And much more

### **Have Your Legal Questions Answered**

Talk to an attorney for help with legal questions, including:

- Divorce, adoption and family law
- Wills and trusts
- Landlord/tenant issues

### **Get Help with Your Finances**

Financial experts can help with a wide range of money matters, including:

- Retirement planning or taxes
- Relocation, mortgages or insurance
- Budgeting, debt or bankruptcy

### **Access Online Tools 24/7**

The ComPsych GuidanceResources website and mobile app provide information and support whenever you need it. Log on for:

- Articles, podcasts, videos and slideshows
- On-demand trainings
- "Ask the Expert" responses to your questions
- Other self-service tools