



**APPENDIX I:
MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE POLICY**

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is (1) provide clear and objective guidelines establishing the circumstances under which a Peace Officer and full-time Telecommunicator is granted mental leave and may use mental health leave; (2) entitle a Peace Officer and Telecommunicators to mental health leave without a deduction in salary or other compensation; (3) enumerate the number of mental health leave days available to a Peace Officer and Telecommunicators; and (4) detail the level of anonymity for a Peace Officer who takes mental health leave. The City of Beeville hereby adopts this paid mental health leave policy for Peace Officers and Telecommunicators.

Definitions:

- 1) **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.
- 2) **Mental Health Professional:** a licensed social or mental health worker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist.
- 3) **"Peace Officer":** means police officers [*may include others, such as marshals, some of whom may be elected*] licensed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and employed by the city. *
- 4) **Telecommunicator:** a person (employee) that receives calls and obtains information from people in need of assistance. They are also called 911 or public safety dispatchers.
- 5) **Traumatic event:** an event which occurs in the peace officer(s) and Telecommunicators 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.

Trauma 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 explosion with multiple casualties: or search and recovery missions involving multiple casualties;
- b) Incidents involving multiple casualties which may include shootings or traffic accidents;
- c) Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
- d) Death of a child resulting from violence or neglect;
- e) Officer(s) involved shooting of a person.

MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE

Requesting Mental Health Leave:

An officer or full-time Telecommunicator 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.

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.

Upon request a list of providers in the surrounding area will be provided to the employee.

No Reduction In Compensation And Benefits:

The City of Beeville will not reduce a Peace Officer's or Telecommunicator's sick leave balance, vacation leave balance, or other paid leave balance in connection with mental health leave taken in accordance with this policy.

Duration Of Mental Health Leave:

An officer or telecommunicator directly involved in a traumatic event may request up to five working days of mental health leave. These days are subject to change if a treating physician suggests a longer time is required for the well-being of the employee.

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 request of sufficient documentation explain the need for the extension.

Confidentiality Of Request:

Any request for mental health leave shall be treated as strictly confidential by all parties involved and shall not be disclosed outside the officer's or telecommunicator'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 health leave shall not discuss that matter with any third party. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.

Violations of any part of this policy, failure to follow the requirements of this policy, and/or falsification of any information or documentation related to this policy, will be subject to corrective action up to and including separation of employment.