

Member Wellness

1034.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Orange County Sheriff's Department is committed to supporting the mental and emotional wellness of its Members. This policy outlines the procedures for administrative leave and counseling referrals following traumatic incidents or periods of significant emotional distress, whether on or off duty.

The Department recognizes that critical incidents and personal hardships can impact a Member's well-being and operational readiness. The goal of this policy is to provide a consistent, compassionate response for the Member while preserving operational integrity and accountability to this Department.

1034.2 DEFINITIONS

Traumatic Critical Incident: Any incident, or series of incidents, involving the actions of Department Members in the performance of their duties, resulting in:

- Death
- Serious physical injury
- Exposure to life-threatening situations
- Severe emotional trauma that significantly impacts the Member(s)

Emotional Distress: A situation in which a Department Member is experiencing significant psychological strain or emotional hardship, and which may temporarily affect the Member's health, decision-making, or operational readiness. This may result from duty-related events or personal circumstances.

1034.3 ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE DETERMINATION

Mandatory Administrative Leave – Lethal Force Use

Any Department Member who uses lethal force during a traumatic critical incident, including but not limited to an Officer-Involved Shooting (OIS), shall be required to take a minimum of three consecutive working days off (with pay). During that time, the Member shall attend a confidential counseling session with a Department-contracted certified counselor. Additional paid administrative leave (beyond the three working days) may be granted with Executive Command Staff approval.

Discretionary Administrative Leave – Other Circumstances

The Executive Command Staff has the discretion to mandate any Member to attend an on-duty counseling session with a Department-contracted certified counselor following a traumatic critical incident. Any Department Member may be required to attend an on-duty counseling session with a Department-contracted certified counselor following a traumatic critical incident when the Member:

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- Is involved in a traumatic critical incident but does not use lethal force.
- Is experiencing significant emotional distress (e.g., tragedy, cumulative stress, mental health crisis).

The amount of paid discretionary administrative leave granted will be determined on a case-by-case basis, and will include consideration of the severity of the traumatic critical incident and the level of emotional distress experienced by the Member.

Requests or recommendations to the Executive Command Staff for discretionary paid leave or an extension of mandatory administrative leave with pay may come from:

- Managers
- Supervisors
- Peer Support Team
- Department Contracted Certified Psychiatric Counselor
- The Member's Association Representative
- The Member themselves

1034.4 COUNSELING REQUIREMENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Department Members placed on administrative leave under this policy shall attend a counseling session with a Department-contracted certified counselor. The Professional Standards Division (PSD) - Employee Relations (ER) Unit shall contact the Department-contracted certified counselor to schedule the session.

1. The Professional Standards Division – Employee Relations Unit shall verify that counseling has been arranged and follow up to ensure the session was attended by the Member.
2. The counseling session results shall remain confidential and will not be documented or reviewed by the Department, in accordance with law and practice.
3. The Member shall notify the PSD-ER Unit or their immediate supervisor of any changes in their work status (e.g., off work, medical restrictions, or full duty) after their mandatory counseling session and prior to their next scheduled work shift.

1034.5 SUPERVISORY AND COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Member's immediate supervisor shall notify their Division Commander as soon as practical after a qualifying event or request.
- The Division Commander shall:
 - Conduct an initial review of the situation
 - Consult with Executive Command Staff
 - Provide a recommendation regarding administrative leave and counseling referral

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- The Executive Command Staff shall make the final determination regarding a Member's leave status and initiate any related administrative actions.