

	MARICOPA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES	
	Subject NEXT-OF-KIN NOTIFICATIONS	Policy Number GJ-12 Effective Date 04-05-23
Related Information ARS 36-831.A GD-19, Injury or <i>Death of an Employee or Volunteer</i> GJ-11, <i>Serious Diagnosed Illness, Serious Physical Injury, or Death of a Prisoner or Inmate</i>	Supersedes GJ-12 (04-10-20)	

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Office Policy is to establish guidelines and procedures regarding the prompt and considerate notification to the next-of-kin of deceased or seriously injured/ill inmates or members of the public.

Although this Office Policy refers to employees throughout, this Office Policy also applies with equal force to all volunteers. Volunteers include, but are not limited to, reserve deputies and posse members.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Office to ensure all Office employees become familiar with the procedures set forth in this Office Policy in order to provide family members and inmates with information and support when making next-of-kin notifications.

DEFINITIONS

Case Agent: The lead investigator designated for a specific investigation. The case agent or designee is responsible for overall management of the case. This would include delegation of investigative tasks, lead tracking, collection of supplemental reports and other relevant case documentation, verifying all evidence is impounded, packaging the case for prosecution, and assisting the prosecutor with the presentation of the case in court proceedings, and providing a final disposition approval of all property and evidence held in reference to the investigation, at the conclusion of the case.

Employee: A person currently employed by the Office in a classified, unclassified, contract, or temporary status.

Exigent Circumstances: The sum of the conditions and information available in any event which, taken in totality, dictates a need for immediate action.

Next-of-Kin: The person or persons most closely related to a decedent by blood or affinity. For the purposes of this policy, ARS 36-831.A specifies the legal order of next-of-kin for the duty of burying the body or providing other funeral and disposition arrangements for a deceased person.

Serious Diagnosed Illness: A serious life-threatening medical condition as diagnosed by Correctional Health Services (CHS) personnel or other licensed healthcare professionals.

Serious Physical Injury: Injury which causes death or creates a reasonable risk of death, severe and permanent disfigurement, severe impairment of health, or loss or protracted impairment of the functions of any bodily organ or limb.

Sheriff's Inmate Electronic Data (SHIELD): An Office jail management system containing information about individuals who are, or have been, incarcerated or booked into an MCSO jail facility. Information is entered in this database when an individual is booked and updated throughout the term of incarceration. This includes, but is not limited to: inmate charges; holds; court dispositions; bond and fine amounts; inmate listed booked in personal property; locker assignments; housing locations; restrictions; emergency medical information; scheduled inmate appointments; and the day-to-day operations of jail facility housing unit shift logs.

PROCEDURES

1. **Next-of-Kin Identification:** The case agent or designee involved in a death investigation or a seriously injured/ill person, shall ensure every effort is made to identify and locate a next-of-kin utilizing any open resource or database available to them. When a next-of-kin cannot be located or contacted, then the closest person of affiliation should be sought. Roommates, non-committed intimate partners, or close friends are not acceptable contacts for next-of-kin notifications.
 - A. The use of open resources in attempts to identify and locate a next-of-kin include, but are not limited to, detectives, neighbors, posse offices, and social media. Databases include, but are not limited to, Sheriff's Inmate Electronic Data (SHIELD), Sheriff's Information Management Services (SIMS), or LexisNexis Accurint.
 - B. All attempts to identify and locate a next-of-kin, whether notification was successful or unsuccessful, shall be documented in an *Incident Report (IR)*.

2. **Next-of-Kin Notifications:** When it becomes necessary to notify a member of the public that a family member is deceased or seriously injured/ill, the case agent or designee shall make the next-of-kin notification as soon as practical following the receipt of the information.
 - A. The names of deceased or seriously injured/ill persons shall not be released until next-of-kin notifications have been completed. It is the responsibility of the assigned case agent or designee making the next-of-kin notification to notify the Communications Division when the next-of-kin notifications have been completed.
 - B. Next-of-kin notifications shall be made, as specified in this Office Policy, unless exigent circumstances make it necessary to use an alternate method of notification. The use of an alternate method of notification requires supervisory approval.
 - C. The case agent or designee shall be used in making in-person next-of-kin notifications to members of the public within Maricopa County.
 - D. The case agent or designee making next-of-kin notifications shall provide the next-of-kin with the appropriate information surrounding the death or serious injury/illness. This information shall include, but is not limited to, the following:
 1. The date and time of occurrence;
 2. The location of occurrence;
 3. The appropriate agency case report number, if applicable;
 4. The name and telephone number of a contact person within the Office or appropriate agency;

5. The name and location of the hospital, medical facility, or mortuary, if known; and
6. The circumstances surrounding the event. This information shall be limited by the following factors:
 - a. In cases involving a pending investigation, the case agent or designee shall not offer an opinion or affix responsibility for an event or death;
 - b. Facts that would tend to compromise an on-going investigation shall not be released; and
 - c. The case agent or designee shall not give opinions as to the cause of death or the type of injury/illness. These questions shall be referred to the appropriate hospital, medical facility personnel, or the Office of the Medical Examiner (OME).
- E. The notifying case agent or designee may request the assistance of Office chaplains or other clergy members, Peer Support/Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), family, friends, and/or community support agencies in making notifications or providing follow-up services to the next-of-kin.
- F. When it becomes necessary to notify next-of-kin in a jurisdiction other than Maricopa County, the following procedures shall be followed by the case agent or designee:
 1. The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction shall be contacted and a request shall be made for an in-person next-of-kin notification on behalf of the Office or the Operations Information Center (OIC) may be contacted and a request made for a next-of-kin notification teletype be sent to the jurisdictional law enforcement agency.
 2. The notifying agency shall be provided with the details necessary to make the proper next-of-kin notification. The details include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Type of notification: either death or serious injury/illness; and
 - b. Full name and call-back number of the designated Office case agent or designee.
 3. The case agent or designee shall request a call-back, e-mail, or fax response from the assisting agency confirming whether or not the next-of-kin notification was made. The next-of-kin notification shall be documented in the IR by the case agent or designee.
- G. Request from Other Agencies: Other agencies may request the Office make in-County next-of-kin notifications on their behalf by contacting the Communications Division with their request. A call for service will be initiated and personnel shall be dispatched. After a next-of-kin notification has been made or attempted, the assigned Office personnel or designee shall re-contact or have the Communications Division re-contact the requesting agency to provide the requesting agency with a next-of-kin notification status report. If requested by the outside agency, the next-of-kin notification shall be documented in an IR.
- H. When no next-of-kin has been identified, the case agent or designee shall contact the Major Crimes Division and notify them that they will be contacting the Maricopa County Public Fiduciary.

3. **Inmate-Related Notifications:**

- A. An inmate who has a serious injury/illness and who has requested family notification, shall be encouraged and assisted if necessary, to make the contact themselves by telephone. If the inmate is unable to make the contact themselves or dies without recent contact with a family member, then the following steps shall be taken:
 - 1. Detention personnel shall initiate the family member notification process by advising the jail facility shift commander of the family notification request and the degree of urgency to the situation.
 - 2. The jail facility shift commander shall be responsible for the following:
 - a. Notifying the jail facility commander of the situation;
 - b. Providing the Jail Crimes Unit Supervisor with information needed for the family notification, such as the nature and severity of the injury/illness and the circumstances surrounding the incident, as specified in Office Policy GJ-11, *Serious Diagnosed Illness, Serious Physical Injury or Death of a Prisoner or Inmate*; and
 - c. If death is imminent, notifying the Office Public Information Office (PIO).
- B. In the event of an inmate death or seriously injured/ill inmate, the Jail Crimes Unit shall be responsible for the following:
 - 1. Selecting the next-of-kin person to be notified according to one of the following:
 - a. The inmate's designation;
 - b. Booking and other SHIELD information;
 - c. The attorney of record or probation officer if no other person is known; or
 - d. The use of open resources in an attempt to identify and locate a next-of-kin which may include, but are not limited to, detectives, neighbors, posse officers, and social media. Databases include, but are not limited to, SHIELD, SIMS, or LexisNexis Accurint.
 - 2. Providing to the next-of-kin the name and telephone number of a contact supervisor at the appropriate jail facility for information and other details. The on-duty Custody Hospital Unit shift supervisor shall serve as the contact person for inmates at any medical facility other than a jail facility.
 - 3. Postponing the next-of-kin notification, if appropriate, due to jail facility security considerations and/or a pending initial investigation.
 - 4. Reporting the completion of the next-of-kin notification process to the responsible jail facility commander along with the name of the individual notified.
 - 5. Notifying the Public Information Office (PIO).

6. Notifying the Maricopa County Public Fiduciary in the event of an inmate death when no next-of-kin are located within a reasonable amount of time, as determined by the Jail Crimes Unit Supervisor.
 7. Notifying the United States (US) Marshal's Office upon the death or serious injury/illness of a federal prisoner in the custody of the Office. The US Marshal's Office shall be provided with the case agent or designee's name and business phone number.
 8. Documenting all next-of-kin notification information in an IR.
- C. No other Office employees shall attempt to conduct an inmate next-of-kin notification unless requested to do so by Jail Crimes.
- D. When an Office employee becomes aware an inmate's family member or friend is deceased or seriously injured/ill, the employee shall:
1. Immediately notify the shift supervisor;
 2. Ensure the inmate is allowed to make an emergency/compassion telephone call to a family member as soon as practical but no later than the end of shift. The employee shall notify the shift supervisor once the call is complete;
 3. Make an entry in the Shift Log indicating the inmate was notified and given the opportunity to make the emergency/compassion telephone call; and
 4. Provide support from a counselor or chaplain when requested by the inmate or deemed necessary by the jail facility commander, or designee. This shall be documented in the Shift Log.
4. **Notification to Office Personnel Next-of-Kin:** Notification of next-of-kin for an Office Line-of-Duty Death and/or Non-Line-of-Duty Death shall be completed, as specified in Office Policy GD-19, *Injury or Death of an Employee or Volunteer*.