



# MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

## STANDARD OPERATING INSTRUCTION

### POLICE CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

**ISSUED:** May 14, 2026

**EFFECTIVE:** May 14, 2026

**REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:**

Assistant Chief Craig Sarnow

**DATE:** April 10, 2026

**ACTION:** Amends SOI (March 8, 2024)

**WILEAG STANDARD(S):** NONE

#### **I. PURPOSE**

To provide law enforcement chaplain services to employees who request them utilizing department appointed chaplains that have met prescribed requirements. Chaplain services will include counsel to department employees and immediate family members, assistance during death notifications, crisis response, visitation to department employees and immediate family members who are sick or injured, and participation at official ceremonies and special occasions.

#### **II. BACKGROUND**

The law enforcement profession has witnessed ever increasing demands and potentially dangerous situations that require even temperament on the part of officers and other employees so that they can perform their duties professionally while also addressing personal issues and challenges that may stem from such circumstances. Sworn officers and administrative staff, along with their immediate families, are impacted during crises and other stressful situations that can have a profound effect on their attitudes, perspectives and personal well-being.

#### **III. SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS**

- A. All law enforcement chaplains shall be appointed by the Chief of Police, or his/her designee.
- B. Department law enforcement chaplains must be ordained or licensed clergy ecclesiastically certified in good standing by a recognized religious denomination at the time of appointment, and shall maintain such standing for the duration of their active service.
- C. Chaplains must have successfully passed an extensive background check conducted by the department prior to appointment to serve as a department law enforcement chaplain and must immediately disclose any derogatory circumstances or events subsequent to their appointment to the office of the Chief of Police.
- D. Chaplains shall receive training as recommended by the Early Intervention Program (EIP), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the Wellness Team and the International Conference of Police Chaplains to include:

- Death notification protocols;
  - Suicide, substance abuse;
  - Ethics;
  - Officer injury and death;
  - Sensitivity and diversity;
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) awareness;
  - Stress management;
  - Legal liability and confidentiality;
  - Resiliency;
  - Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) certification; and
  - Any other training as required or recommended by the Chief of Police.
- E. Department law enforcement chaplains shall be provided with a department identification card and be granted physical access to MPD facilities in accordance with SOP 785 *Sponsorship of Non-Department Members*.
- F. All appointments made to the Police Chaplaincy Program do not carry tenure and may be revoked at the discretion of the Chief of Police, or his/her designee.

#### **IV. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

- A. The Milwaukee Police Department's Chaplaincy Program will provide support to employees and their immediate families during times when they have a need to reach out to and confide in individuals with training in empathetic listening. Chaplains are well suited to serve in this capacity because of the nature of their education and training along with an ability to understand the nature of law enforcement while maintaining professional distance.
- B. Law enforcement employees may choose not to discuss certain situations that affect their work or personal lives with supervisors, co-workers or immediate family members to avoid undue concern or negative judgment. While they may contact their own clergy where applicable, employees may benefit from the services of law enforcement chaplains in a unique way regarding issues related to the law enforcement profession.
- C. Chaplains, with the exception of the lead law enforcement chaplain, shall serve on a volunteer basis and shall not receive compensation, monetary or otherwise, for their participation in the program. Chaplains, with the exception of the lead law enforcement

chaplain, are not employees of the Milwaukee Police Department and are not entitled to any benefits afforded to members of the Milwaukee Police Department.

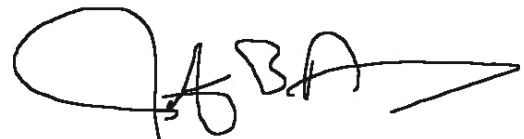
- D. Law enforcement chaplains, by virtue of the chaplaincy, are not sworn law enforcement officers and have no law enforcement power.
- E. The Police Chaplaincy Program will operate as part of the department's Wellness Team.

## V. CODE OF CONDUCT

- A. Chaplains are required to conform to the standards and protocols of the International Conference of Police Chaplains and the Canons of Ethics for Law Enforcement Chaplains.
- B. The law enforcement chaplain serves in an ecumenical capacity. He or she is not to use the chaplaincy to proselytize or to preach in order to win adherents to his or her faith group. Chaplains may provide spiritual guidance or counseling only if so requested by a member. It shall be assumed that the law enforcement chaplain shall be familiar with the beliefs and practices of the various faith groups represented in his or her department. Chaplains shall make reasonable efforts to ascertain if department employees and/or their immediate family members have personal clergy and offer to contact that clergy for assistance and to advise the nature of law enforcement chaplaincy services if the employee/family member chooses.
- C. Chaplains may suggest to department employees and/or their immediate family members to further seek guidance from their personal clergy or other counseling services such as the department psychologist, the Early Intervention Program (EIP), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and the Wellness Team when deemed appropriate.
- D. Chaplains shall not engage in public comment or criticism regarding the department, its activities and its employees or their immediate families while actively serving as a duly appointed department law enforcement chaplain.
- E. Chaplains shall maintain confidentiality and not release any information to media or other social networks of communication concerning law enforcement sensitive issues and information.
- F. Chaplains shall not interfere with department sworn officers, civilian employees, or any hospital staff in the performance of their official duties. Chaplains shall respect all operational, medical, and administrative protocols and avoid actions that could impede law enforcement activities, patient care, or hospital operations.
- G. The chaplain may witness a criminal act or a violation of the Code of Conduct by a department member. These events do not constitute a "confessional" and should be reported.
- H. Chaplains shall conduct him or herself in a professional and compassionate manner consistent with the intent of this policy. Inappropriate or unethical conduct exhibited by the chaplain shall be grounds for immediate dismissal by the Chief of Police.

**VI. LEAD LAW ENFORCEMENT CHAPLAIN**

- A. The lead law enforcement chaplain shall serve as the liaison between the law enforcement chaplains and the department and is appointed by the Chief of Police.
- B. The function of the lead law enforcement chaplain is to provide a central coordinating point for effective law enforcement chaplain management within the department.
- C. Under the general direction of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee, law enforcement chaplains shall report to the lead law enforcement chaplain.
- D. Additional duties to include but not limited to:
  - 1. Participation in recruitment;
  - 2. Selection and training qualified law enforcement chaplains,
  - 3. Conducting law enforcement chaplain meetings,
  - 4. Maintaining a record of law enforcement chaplain schedules and work hours,
  - 5. Completing and disseminating all necessary paperwork and information, and
  - 6. Maintaining liaison with the department psychologist, the Early Intervention Program (EIP) the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the Wellness Team, local agency law enforcement chaplain coordinators and the Salvation Army Chaplain Coordinator.



JEFFREY B. NORMAN  
CHIEF OF POLICE

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