



EL PASO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Peace Officer Mental Health Leave Policy

Effective Date: September 1, 2021

Adopted Date: October 18, 2021

The Purpose of this policy is to allow the use of mental health leave by the Peace Officers employed by The County of El Paso who experience a traumatic event in the scope of employment.

I. Scope

This policy applies to licensed Peace Officers employed by The County of El Paso and as defined by Government Code Chapter 614.

II. Definitions

- A. **Traumatic Event** – An incident that causes physical, emotional, spiritual, or psychological harm. Examples of traumatic events include but not limited to:
 - 1. Being physically attacked or assaulted
 - 2. Serious Illness
 - 3. Being verbally or emotionally abused
 - 4. Witnessing a shooting or stabbing of a person
 - 5. Being or responding to an accident or natural disaster
 - 6. Witnessing a death
 - 7. Being sexually assaulted
 - 8. Witnessing domestic abuse or violence
 - 9. Witnessing bodily harm or death
 - 10. A fear of harm or high stress environment
- B. **Wellness Application** – Wellness technology for high-stress professions, providing trusted, confidential, 24/7 proactive and preventative wellness support especially for law enforcement, dispatchers, and others serving in the most demanding and critical roles.
- C. **Mental Health Professional** – A Licensed professional, departmentally authorized social or mental health caseworker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist.
- D. **EAP** (Employee Assistance Program) – A program designed to offer confidential and appropriate assessment services for employees to help identify and resolve personal difficulties before they seriously affect their personal wellbeing or employee job performance.

III. Conditions

An Officer shall be allowed up to 3 days of paid mental health leave per calendar year, subject to the following conditions:

- A. The leave is:
 - 1. Evaluated by Human Resources as an event which qualifies under this policy; or
 - 2. Ordered by a mental health professional; and
- B. The leave is taken as a result of a traumatic event that occurred in the scope of employment.

IV. Anonymity

The County of El Paso will keep requests to take mental health leave and any medical information related to mental health leave under this policy confidential to the extent allowed by law and separate from the employee's general personnel file. The County cannot guarantee anonymity of information that is otherwise public or necessary to carry out the County's duties under the law.

V. Professional Mental Health Services

- A. Mental Health services providers are available to all employees of the El Paso County and their families through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or as allowed by insurance coverage. Use of these services shall be treated in the same manner as any other work-related illness or disability. Please refer to the El Paso County Employee Assistance Program policy for further details.
- B. The services of mental health professionals may be invoked by employee self-referral, referral by supervisor, through the department or by policy following life-threatening, traumatic experiences.

VI. Coding of Time

Any time taken under this policy shall be coded to Pay Code: Leave ADC with Task Code: MENTAL-HEALTH-LEAVE

VII. Effect on Salary, Other Compensation and Paid Leave Balances

The El Paso County will not reduce an eligible employee's salary or other compensation, sick leave, vacation, holiday, or other paid leave balance for mental health leave taken under this policy.