

# **TOWN OF PROSPER PERSONNEL POLICY**

## **Section 5.11: MENTAL HEALTH LEAVE FOR PEACE OFFICERS, FIRE FIGHTERS, AND TELECOMMUNICATORS**

The Town of Prosper will provide paid Mental Health Leave to Peace Officers, Fire Fighters and Telecommunicators. If a Peace Officer, Fire Fighter or Telecommunicator experiences a traumatic event directly related to their job duties, Mental Health Leave may be allowed so that the Peace Officer, Fire Fighter, or Telecommunicator can recover or begin the process of recovery and accessing needed resources for treatment. This policy is effective September 1, 2021 updated September 1, 2023.

### **A. Definitions**

**Peace Officer:** A Police Officer, or may include other sworn personnel, licensed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and actively employed by the Town.

**Fire Fighter:** A Fire Fighter licensed by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection and actively employed by the Town.

**Telecommunicator:** A Telecommunicator licensed as a Texas Law Enforcement Dispatcher and actively employed by the Town.

**Traumatic Event:** An event which occurs in the Peace Officer's, Fire Fighter's or Telecommunicator's scope of employment when the employee is involved in the response to, or investigation of, an event that causes the employee to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function during or after the incident.

The Police Officer, Fire Fighter, or Telecommunicator may directly experience the traumatic event or witness, in person, the traumatic event as it occurred to others. Other circumstances that may qualify would include learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or a close friend or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to the details of the event. In the case of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.

Traumatic events may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Major disasters which may include response to weather related events involving multiple casualties; or explosions with multiple casualties; or search and recovery missions involving multiple casualties;
2. Incidents involving multiple casualties which may include shootings or traffic accidents;
3. Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
4. Death or serious injury of a child resulting from violence, sexual abuse, or neglect;
5. Officer(s) involved in the shooting of a person.

**Mental Health Leave:** Administrative leave with pay granted in response to a traumatic event that occurred in the scope of the Peace Officer's, Fire Fighter's or Telecommunicator's employment.

**Adopted August 24, 2021**

**Mental Health Professional:** A licensed social or mental health worker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist as approved by the Town of Prosper.

## **B. Requesting Mental Health Leave**

A Police Officer, Fire Fighter, or 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 and in consultation with the Human Resources Director. 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.

## **C. Duration of Mental Health Leave**

A Police Officer, Fire Fighter, or Telecommunicator directly involved in a traumatic event may request up to 40 hours of paid mental health leave per event. Any hours utilized as mental health leave shall be calculated as regular hours worked. There shall be no deduction in salary or other compensation for mental health leave.

Extensions of 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 Chief shall grant the extension upon the receipt of sufficient documentation and in consultation with Human Resources.

## **D. Confidentiality**

Any request for mental health leave shall be treated as strictly confidential by all parties involved and shall not be discussed or disclosed outside the officer's immediate chain of command and Human Resources and only as necessary to facilitate the use of the leave. Any Police Officer, Fire Fighter, or Telecommunicator or supervisor who becomes aware of behavioral changes and suggests the employee seek mental health leave shall not discuss that matter with any third party. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.

Confidentiality may be waived by the employee seeking mental health leave. In addition, confidentiality may be waived under circumstances which indicate the officer is a danger to himself/herself or others and department personnel must confer with mental health professionals.