

City of Amarillo
Personnel Policies and Procedures

Policy Title: Mental Health Leave

Policy Number: 609

Effective Date: September 1, 2023

Approved by: Jared Miller, City Manager
Mitchell Normand, Director of Human Resources

I. PURPOSE

Pursuant to Texas Local Government Code Section 614.015, The City of Amarillo adopts the Mental Health Leave for Peace Officers who are employed as Peace Officers by the City of Amarillo. This policy provides guidance on the application of mental health leave.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals employed as Peace Officers or full-time telecommunicators for the City of Amarillo.

III. DEFINITIONS

Authorized designee – management personnel identified by the Department Director to manage requests for mental health leave consistent with the Department Director’s authorization and this policy.

Department Director – The most senior authority of the department authorized to employ peace officers. Examples include the Police Chief.

Leave administrator - designated organization identified by the City of Amarillo to administer the City’s leave programs.

Mental health leave – administrative leave with pay granted in response to a traumatic event that occurred in the scope of the peace officer’s employment.

Mental Health Professional – a licensed social or mental health worker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

Telecommunicator – a person acknowledged by the commission and employed by or serving a law enforcement agency that performs law enforcement services on a 24-hour basis who receives, processes, and transmits public safety information and criminal justice data for the agency by using a base radio station on a public safety frequency regulated by the Federal Communications Commission or by another method of communication.

Traumatic event: an event which occurs in the peace officer(s) scope of employment when the officer is involved in the response to, or investigation of, an event that causes the officer to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function during or after the incident. Traumatic events may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. 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;
- b. Incidents involving multiple casualties which may include shootings or traffic accidents;
- c. Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
- d. Death of a child resulting from violence or neglect;
- e. Officer(s) involved shooting of a person.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

IV.1 Department Director

- a. Ensure all applicable personnel are knowledgeable of this policy.
- b. Ensure consistent application and adherence to this policy.
- c. Identify designees authorized to receive and approve requests for mental health leave.
- d. Approve requests for mental health leave.

IV.2 Designee

- a. Receive all requests for mental health leave and approve requests for mental health leave, as authorized by the Department Director.
- b. Maintain confidentiality when managing an employee's mental health leave request.
- c. Respond immediately to an employee's request for mental health leave.
- d. Notify designated timekeeper of approved request for mental health leave.
- e. Maintain all requests for mental leave.

IV.3 Employee Responsibilities

- a. Submit requests for mental health leave to the appropriate designee(s).

V. PROCEDURES

- V.1 An officer 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. 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.
- V.2 A supervisor or coworker who becomes aware of behavioral changes in an officer or telecommunicator 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.
- V.3 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 only as necessary to facilitate the use of the leave. Any officer, telecommunicator or supervisor who becomes aware of behavioral changes and suggests the officer seek mental health leave shall not discuss that matter with any third party. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.
- V.4 Confidentiality may be waived by the officer or telecommunicator seeking mental health leave. Confidentiality may be waived under circumstances which indicate the officer is a danger to himself or herself or others and department personnel must confer with mental health professionals.
- V.5 An officer directly involved in a traumatic event may request up to three working days of mental health leave.
 - a. Extensions of mental health leave may be available under certain circumstances. If an officer or telecommunicator experiences a need for additional mental health leave, the authorized designee shall engage the Risk Management Department to consider options available under Texas Workers' Compensation law. If determined to not be

compensable under the guidelines of the Division of Workers' Compensation, the officer or telecommunicator may request additional time off consistent with City of Amarillo Leave Policies.

VI. AVAILABLE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

All City of Amarillo employees have access to available counselling services through the contracted Employee Assistance Program (See Attachment A). Employees covered under the City's group medical plan may also seek treatment from a mental health professional included in the approved medical network (See Attachment B)

VII. EXCEPTIONS

The City Manager reserves the right to modify, override, and/or supplement this policy at any time for any reason based upon Federal, State, or local law and/or based on the needs of the City.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Deer Oaks Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free service provided for you, your dependents, and household members as of your first day of employment with the City. This program offers a wide variety of counseling, referral, and consultation services, which are all designed to assist you and your family in resolving work and life issues in order to live happier, healthier, more balanced lives. From stress, addiction and change management, to locating childcare facilities, legal assistance, and financial challenges, their qualified professionals are here to help. These services are completely confidential and can be easily accessed 24/7, offering you around-the-clock assistance for all of life's challenges. Counseling services are available in person, over the phone, or via telehealth where you and anyone living in your household receive up to six free, confidential counseling sessions per issue.

Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) – Deer Oaks EAP Services

888-993-7650 (24/7)

www.deeroakseap.com (Username & Password – Amarillo)

Medical Plan

The City offers an Exclusive Provider Organization (EPO) medical plan through Aetna and it offers you access to a broad network of in-network providers and facilities. The medical plan will only provide coverage for in-network services. Out-of-network services “will not” be covered under the medical plan. However, in emergency situations out-of-network services may be covered under the medical plan. Note: Outside the local Amarillo area there is a nationwide network through Aetna where you can seek care from other in-network providers and facilities.

Locate in-network providers/facilities at www.Aetna.com or through the Aetna Health App. . First time users must set up and register an account through the Aetna site or App. Once registered, you can locate in-network providers/facilities locally or nationwide. You must log into your account every time to locate in-network facilities/providers. Aetna customer service representatives are also available to assist with in-network searches and their number is located on your Aetna card. A medical card with prescription information on the back of the card will be mailed to your home address on file.

Medical/Dental – Aetna (Group #737475)	800-410-2386 (M-F, 7am to 7pm) – General Questions 855-TELADOC (24/7) - Teladoc www.Aetna.com or Aetna App (Text “AETNA” to 90156 to receive a link to download the Aetna Health App)
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