

# Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths

## 305.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish policy and procedures for the investigation of an incident in which a person is injured or dies as the result of an officer-involved shooting or dies as a result of other action of a deputy.

In other incidents not covered by this policy, the Sheriff may decide that the investigation will follow the process provided in this policy.

## 305.2 POLICY

The policy of the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office is to ensure that officer-involved shootings and deaths are investigated in a thorough, fair and impartial manner.

## 305.3 TYPES OF INVESTIGATIONS

Officer-involved shootings and deaths involve several separate investigations. The investigations may include:

- A criminal investigation of the suspect's actions.
- A criminal investigation of the involved officer's actions.
- An administrative investigation as to policy compliance by involved deputies.
- A civil investigation to determine potential liability.

## 305.4 CONTROL OF INVESTIGATIONS

Investigators from surrounding agencies, as part of the 12th Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team, may be assigned in cooperation with the Colorado Bureau of Investigation to work on the criminal investigation of officer-involved shootings and deaths. This may include at least one investigator from the agency that employs the involved officer.

Jurisdiction is determined by the location of the shooting or death and the agency employing the involved officer. The following scenarios outline the jurisdictional responsibilities for investigating officer-involved shootings and deaths.

### 305.4.1 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OF SUSPECT ACTIONS

The investigation of any possible criminal conduct by the suspect is controlled by the agency in whose jurisdiction the suspect's crime occurred. For example, the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office would control the investigation if the suspect's crime occurred in unincorporated Rio Grande County.

If multiple crimes have been committed in multiple jurisdictions, identification of the agency that will control the investigation may be reached in the same way as with any other crime. The investigation may be conducted by the agency in control of the criminal investigation of the involved officer, at the discretion of the Sheriff and with concurrence from the other agency.

## *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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### **305.4.2 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OF OFFICER ACTIONS**

The control of the criminal investigation into the involved deputy's conduct during the incident will be determined by the employing agency's protocol. When a deputy from this office is involved, the criminal investigation will be handled according to the Criminal Investigation section of this policy.

Requests made of this office to investigate a shooting or death involving an outside agency's officer shall be referred to the Sheriff or the Undersheriff for approval.

### **305.4.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND CIVIL INVESTIGATION**

Regardless of where the incident occurs, the administrative and civil investigation of each involved officer is controlled by the respective employing agency.

## **305.5 INVESTIGATION PROCESS**

The following procedures are guidelines used in the investigation of an officer-involved shooting or death.

### **305.5.1 UNINVOLVED DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Upon arrival at the scene of an officer-involved shooting or death, the first uninvolved RGSO deputy will be the deputy-in-charge and will assume the responsibilities of a supervisor until properly relieved. This deputy should, as appropriate:

- (a) Secure the scene and identify and eliminate hazards for all those involved.
- (b) Take reasonable steps to obtain emergency medical attention for injured individuals.
- (c) Request additional resources from the Office or other agencies.
- (d) Coordinate a perimeter or pursuit of suspects.
- (e) Check for injured persons and evacuate as needed.
- (f) Brief the supervisor upon arrival.

### **305.5.2 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Upon arrival at the scene, the first uninvolved RGSO supervisor should ensure completion of the duties as outlined above, plus:

- (a) Attempt to obtain a brief overview of the situation from any uninvolved officers.
  1. In the event that there are no uninvolved officers who can supply adequate overview, the supervisor should attempt to obtain a brief voluntary overview from one involved officer.
- (b) If necessary, the supervisor may administratively order any RGSO deputy to immediately provide public safety information necessary to secure the scene, identify injured parties and pursue suspects.
  1. Public safety information shall be limited to such things as outstanding suspect information, number and direction of any shots fired, perimeter of the incident scene, identity of known or potential witnesses and any other pertinent information.

# Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office

## Policy Manual

### *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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2. The initial on-scene supervisor should not attempt to order any involved officer to provide any information other than public safety information.
- (c) Provide all available information to the Shift Supervisor and Communications. If feasible, sensitive information should be communicated over secure networks.
- (d) Take command of and secure the incident scene with additional RGSO members until properly relieved by another supervisor or other assigned personnel or investigator.
- (e) As soon as practicable, ensure that involved officers are transported (separately, if feasible) to a suitable location for further direction.
  - (a) Each involved RGSO deputy should be given an administrative order not to discuss the incident with other involved officers or RGSO members pending further direction from the Sheriff.
  - (b) When an involved officer's weapon is taken or left at the scene for other than officer-safety reasons (e.g., evidence), ensure that he/she is provided with a comparable replacement weapon or transported by other deputies.

#### 305.5.3 SHIFT SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon learning of an officer-involved shooting or death, the Shift Supervisor shall be responsible for coordinating all aspects of the incident until relieved by the Sheriff or Undersheriff.

All outside inquiries about the incident shall be directed to the Sheriff.

#### 305.5.4 NOTIFICATIONS

The following persons shall be notified as soon as practicable:

- Sheriff
- Undersheriff
- Colorado Bureau of Investigation
- Outside agency investigators (if appropriate) and/or the 12th Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team
- Internal Affairs Unit supervisor
- Civil liability response team
- Psychological/peer support personnel
- Coroner (if necessary)
- Involved officer's agency representative (if requested)
- Public Information Officer

#### 305.5.5 INVOLVED OFFICERS

The following shall be considered for the involved officer:

- (a) Any request for legal professional association representation will be accommodated.

# Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office

## Policy Manual

### *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

---

1. Involved RGSO deputies shall not be permitted to meet collectively or in a group with an attorney or any representative prior to providing a formal interview or report.
2. Requests from involved non-RGSO officers should be referred to their employing agency.
- (b) Discussions with licensed attorneys will be considered privileged as attorney-client communications.
- (c) Discussions with agency representatives/employee groups will be privileged only as to the discussion of non-criminal information.
- (d) A licensed psychotherapist shall be provided by the Office to each involved RGSO deputy. A licensed psychotherapist may also be provided to any other affected RGSO members, upon request.
  1. Interviews with a licensed psychotherapist will be considered privileged.
  2. An interview or session with a licensed psychotherapist may take place prior to the member providing a formal interview or report. However, involved members shall not be permitted to consult or meet collectively or in a group with a licensed psychotherapist prior to providing a formal interview or report.
  3. A separate fitness-for-duty exam may also be required (see the Fitness for Duty Policy).
  4. Communications between the involved deputy and a peer support member are addressed in the Wellness Program Policy.
- (e) Involved deputies will be allowed to contact their spouse or immediate family member to reassure them. They will be discouraged from discussing details of the incident.

Care should be taken to preserve the integrity of any physical evidence present on the involved officer's equipment or clothing, such as blood or fingerprints, until investigators or lab personnel can properly retrieve it.

Each involved RGSO deputy shall be given reasonable paid administrative leave following an officer-involved shooting or death or appropriate duty reassignment as agreed upon by the involved deputy and the Office to allow the deputy to receive services and manage the impact of the incident on the deputy and the deputy's family and significant others. It shall be the responsibility of the Shift Supervisor to make schedule adjustments to accommodate such leave.

#### **305.6 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION**

The Colorado Bureau of Investigation is responsible for the criminal investigation into the circumstances of any officer-involved shooting or death. They may work in cooperation with the 12th Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team.

If available, investigative personnel from this office may be assigned to partner with investigators from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation and/or the 12th Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team to avoid duplicating efforts in related criminal investigations.

### *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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Once public safety issues have been addressed, criminal investigators should be given the opportunity to obtain a voluntary statement from involved officers and to complete their interviews.

The following shall be considered for the involved officer:

- (a) RGSO supervisors and Internal Affairs Unit personnel should not participate directly in any voluntary interview of RGSO deputies. This will not prohibit such personnel from monitoring interviews or providing the criminal investigators with topics for inquiry.
- (b) If requested, any involved officer will be afforded the opportunity to consult individually with a representative of his/her choosing or an attorney prior to speaking with criminal investigators. However, in order to maintain the integrity of each involved officer's statement, involved deputies shall not consult or meet with a representative or an attorney collectively or in groups prior to being interviewed.
- (c) If any involved officer is physically, emotionally or otherwise not in a position to provide a voluntary statement when interviewed by criminal investigators, consideration should be given to allowing a reasonable period for the officer to schedule an alternate time for the interview.
- (d) Any voluntary statement provided by an involved officer will be made available for inclusion in any related investigation, including administrative investigations. However, no administratively coerced statement will be provided to any criminal investigators unless the officer consents.

#### 305.6.1 REPORTS BY INVOLVED RGSO DEPUTIES

In the event that suspects remain outstanding or subject to prosecution for related offenses, this office shall retain the authority to require involved RGSO deputies to provide sufficient information for related criminal reports to facilitate the apprehension and prosecution of those individuals.

While the involved RGSO deputy may write the report, it is generally recommended that such reports be completed by assigned investigators, who should interview all involved officers as victims/witnesses. Since the purpose of these reports will be to facilitate criminal prosecution, statements of involved officers should focus on evidence to establish the elements of criminal activities by suspects. Care should be taken not to duplicate information provided by involved officers in other reports.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to deprive an involved RGSO deputy of the right to consult with legal counsel prior to completing any such criminal report.

Reports related to the prosecution of criminal suspects will be processed according to normal procedures but should also be included for reference in the investigation of the officer-involved shooting or death.

#### 305.6.2 WITNESS IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVIEWS

Because potential witnesses to an officer-involved shooting or death may become unavailable or the integrity of their statements compromised with the passage of time, a supervisor should

# Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office

## Policy Manual

### *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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take reasonable steps to promptly coordinate with criminal investigators to utilize available law enforcement personnel for the following:

- (a) Identification of all persons present at the scene and in the immediate area.
  - 1. When feasible, a recorded statement should be obtained from those persons who claim not to have witnessed the incident but who were present at the time it occurred.
  - 2. Any potential witness who is unwilling or unable to remain available for a formal interview should not be detained absent reasonable suspicion to detain or probable cause to arrest. Without detaining the individual for the sole purpose of identification, attempts to identify the witness prior to his/her departure should be made whenever feasible.
- (b) Witnesses who are willing to provide a formal interview should be asked to meet at a suitable location where criminal investigators may obtain a recorded statement. Such witnesses, if willing, may be transported by a member of the Office.
  - 1. A written, verbal or recorded statement of consent should be obtained prior to transporting a witness. When the witness is a minor, consent should be obtained from the parent or guardian, if available, prior to transportation.
- (c) Promptly contacting the suspect's known family and associates to obtain any available and untainted background information about the suspect's activities and state of mind prior to the incident.

#### 305.6.3 INVESTIGATIVE PERSONNEL

Once notified of an officer-involved shooting or death, it shall be the responsibility of the designated Investigation Unit supervisor to assign appropriate investigative personnel to handle the investigation of related crimes. Office investigators will be assigned to work with investigators from the District Attorney's Office or other agencies and may be assigned to separately handle the investigation of any related crimes not being investigated by the District Attorney's Office or other agencies of jurisdiction.

All related office reports, except administrative and/or privileged reports, will be forwarded to the designated Investigation Unit supervisor for approval. Privileged reports shall be maintained exclusively by members who are authorized such access. Administrative reports will be forwarded to the Sheriff or Undersheriff.

#### 305.6.4 MULTI-AGENCY INVESTIGATION

Officer-involved shootings that result in injury or death or other uses of force by a deputy that result in death shall be investigated by a multi-agency team. The multi-agency team shall include at least one other police or sheriff's agency or the Colorado Bureau of Investigation. The Sheriff or the authorized designee shall ensure this protocol is posted on the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office website and is available to the public upon request (CRS § 16-2.5-301).

### *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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#### **305.7 ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATION**

In addition to all other investigations associated with an officer-involved shooting or death, this office will conduct an internal administrative investigation of involved RGSO deputies to determine conformance with office policy. This investigation will be conducted under the supervision of the Internal Affairs Unit and will be considered a confidential deputy personnel file. This investigation may be assigned to another agency upon agreement.

Interviews of members shall be subject to office policies (see the Personnel Complaints Policy) and applicable laws.

- (a) Any deputy involved in a shooting or death may be requested or administratively compelled to provide a blood sample for alcohol/drug screening. Absent consent from the deputy, such compelled samples and the results of any such testing shall not be disclosed to any criminal investigative agency.
- (b) If any deputy has voluntarily elected to provide a statement to criminal investigators, the assigned administrative investigator should review that statement before proceeding with any further interview of that involved deputy.
  - 1. If a further interview of the deputy is deemed necessary to determine policy compliance, care should be taken to limit the inquiry to new areas with minimal, if any, duplication of questions addressed in the voluntary statement. The involved deputy shall be provided with a copy of his/her prior statement before proceeding with any subsequent interviews.
- (c) In the event that an involved deputy has elected not to provide criminal investigators with a voluntary statement, the assigned administrative investigator shall conduct an administrative interview to determine all relevant information.
  - 1. Although this interview should not be unreasonably delayed, care should be taken to ensure that the deputy's physical and psychological needs have been addressed before commencing the interview.
  - 2. If requested, the deputy shall have the opportunity to select an uninvolved representative to be present during the interview. However, in order to maintain the integrity of each individual deputy's statement, involved deputies shall not consult or meet with a representative collectively or in groups prior to being interviewed.
  - 3. Administrative interviews should be recorded by the investigator. The deputy may also record the interview.
  - 4. The deputy shall be informed of the nature of the investigation. If a deputy refuses to answer questions, he/she should be given his/her Garrity rights and ordered to provide full and truthful answers to all questions. The deputy shall be informed that the interview will be for administrative purposes only and that the statement cannot be used criminally.
  - 5. The Internal Affairs Unit shall compile all relevant information and reports necessary for the Office to determine compliance with applicable policies.

## *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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6. Regardless of whether the use of force is an issue in the case, the completed administrative investigation shall be submitted to the Use of Force Review Board, which will restrict its findings as to whether there was compliance with the Use of Force Policy.
7. Any other indications of potential policy violations shall be determined in accordance with standard disciplinary procedures.

### **305.8 CIVIL LIABILITY RESPONSE**

A member of this office may be assigned to work exclusively under the direction of the legal counsel for the Office to assist in the preparation of materials deemed necessary in anticipation of potential civil litigation.

All materials generated in this capacity shall be considered attorney work product and may not be used for any other purpose. The civil liability response is not intended to interfere with any other investigation but shall be given reasonable access to all other investigations.

### **305.9 AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS**

Any officer involved in a shooting or death may be permitted to review available Mobile Audio/Video (MAV), body-worn video, or other video or audio recordings prior to providing a recorded statement or completing reports.

Upon request, non-law enforcement witnesses who are able to verify their presence and their ability to contemporaneously perceive events at the scene of an incident may also be permitted to review available MAV, body-worn video, or other video or audio recordings with the approval of assigned investigators or a supervisor.

Any MAV, body-worn and other known video or audio recordings of an incident should not be publicly released during an ongoing investigation without consulting the prosecuting attorney or County Attorney's Office, as appropriate.

### **305.10 DEBRIEFING**

Following an officer-involved shooting or death, the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office should conduct both a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and a tactical debriefing. See the Wellness Program Policy for guidance on Critical Incident Stress Debriefings.

#### **305.10.1 TACTICAL DEBRIEFING**

A tactical debriefing should take place to identify any training or areas of policy that need improvement. The Sheriff should identify the appropriate participants. This debriefing should not be conducted until all involved members have provided recorded or formal statements to criminal and/or administrative investigators.

### **305.11 MEDIA RELATIONS**

Any media release shall be prepared with input and concurrence from the supervisor and office representative responsible for each phase of the investigation. Releases will be available to the



### *Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths*

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Shift Supervisor, Undersheriff and Public Information Officer in the event of inquiries from the media.

No involved RGSO deputy shall make any comment to the media unless he/she is authorized by the Sheriff or Undersheriff.

Office members receiving inquiries regarding officer-involved shootings or deaths occurring in other jurisdictions shall refrain from public comment and will direct those inquiries to the agency having jurisdiction and primary responsibility for the investigation.

#### **305.12 POST-INCIDENT SERVICES FOR FAMILY**

The family members and significant others of a deputy who has been involved in a shooting or deadly use of force should be provided, as office resources reasonably allow (CRS § 16-2.5-403):

- (a) At least one confidential post-incident meeting with a qualified mental health professional (CRS § 16-2.5-402) in a timely manner following the incident, including through telehealth services.
- (b) Ongoing confidential mental health services from a qualified mental health professional (CRS § 16-2.5-402) as needed, including through telehealth services.
- (c) Peer support, including office peer support or online or telehealth peer support.

#### **305.13 PROTOCOLS FOR RETURN TO DUTY**

The Office shall take steps to facilitate returning office members back to their duty assignments following their involvement in a shooting or deadly use of force, taking into consideration the Office's size and resources (CRS § 16-2.5-403).

##### **305.13.1 REINTEGRATION**

Taking into account that involved deputies may experience psychological, physical, or emotional reactions, the Office shall implement a reintegration plan that considers having the deputy:

- (a) Return to the scene of the incident.
- (b) Fire the deputy's weapon at the range, including a qualification with issued firearms.
- (c) Participate in graded re-entry with a companion deputy or peer support deputy of the deputy's choosing.

##### **305.13.2 ONGOING SUPPORTIVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

A deputy who has been involved in a shooting or deadly use of force shall be provided ongoing supportive mental health services, including confidential follow-up by a qualified mental health professional (CRS § 16-2.5-402), either in person or through telehealth services.

#### **305.14 POLICY REVIEW**

The Office shall review this policy biennially and make any necessary updates to reflect current best practices and available resources (CRS § 16-2.5-403).