City of Cambridge
Police Department

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Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

October 27, 2009

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

Re: City Council Order No. 13, dated October 5, 2009

Dear Sir:

As requested I am responding to the above mentioned City Council Order regarding the Police Department's role and responsibility in the aftermath of a traumatic incident. There are a number of services that the Police Department uses to refer victims of domestic violence and other traumatic incidents. If the needs for services are related to instances of traumatic care or emotional crisis, the department often refers adults to the Victims of Violence Program through the Cambridge Health Alliance. If a child is in need of these services we utilize the Child Witness to Violence Program that is administered though the Guidance Center.

Two programs that are used as needed are the Center for Homicide Bereavement and the Community Crisis Response Team. The Center for Homicide Bereavement offers crisis intervention and ongoing bereavement counseling for families and individuals of all ages. Bereavement support groups offer the survivor a safe place to experience caring support, share concerns and feelings and find new ways of coping. The Center also offers victim advocacy, consultation, support and referral to other services of the Victims of Violence Program and other community and governmental resources. The Community Crisis Response Team (CCRT) mission is to provide coordinated support to communities and groups from the area who request assistance in the aftermath of a violent incident or other tragic event. It is important to note that the services of the CCRT are provided on a case by case basis and must be initiated by the affected community.

Both the Center for Homicide Bereavement and the Community Crisis Response Team are services of the Victims of Violence Program of the Cambridge Health Alliance. In instances of domestic violence Transition House offers useful services that are also part of the Police Department referrals. They include the Transition House Dating Intervention Program for teens involved in dating violence and the Domestic Violence Crisis Hotline which is staffed by an advocate 24-hour a day.

Another important resource the department utilizes as a referral is the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center which provides survivors and their families with support and the resources they need to begin healing.

The Police Department also utilizes a door-to-door neighborhood canvas in the aftermath of a traumatic event. During the canvas the residents are visited by an officer with the purpose of not only trying to develop information or witnesses of the incident to further the investigation, but also to provide the resident with accurate information as to the nature of the incident that occurred and to also allay any unrealistic fears the resident may have. During the canvass, officers provide contact information and are available to address any concerns or needs the resident may have. While the Police Department does not have a formal procedure, we do utilize handouts for programs provided by the service agencies noted above and are able to identify the resources available to assist the victims and survivors of traumatic events as needed.

If you require additional information please let me know.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Haas
Police Commissioner

RCH/bk