The Long Stretch: A Year of Follow-Through

For chaplains, chiefs of police, departments, churches, and civic organizations

The family should not have to carry the name alone.

TIMEFRAME	WHO LEADS	WHAT TO DO
Days 1–7	Chaplain Command staff	■ Assign a primary point of contact for the family. ■ Notify all department personnel with consistent language. ■ Coordinate food, transportation, and immediate practical needs. ■ Establish family's preferred communication method. ■ Begin tracking key dates: death, birthday, children's birthdays.
30 Days	Chaplain Survivor liaison	■ Personal call or visit — not a check-box, a conversation. ■ Ask how the family is sleeping, eating, managing. ■ Confirm benefits and paperwork are moving forward. ■ Check in with officers who were close to the fallen. ■ Assess whether children's school has been notified and supported.
90 Days	Chaplain Department	■ Call again — support often fades and isolation sets in here. ■ Ask what's been the hardest part of the last few weeks. ■ Verify the family has survivor-group connections if desired. ■ Hold an informal department gathering or acknowledgment. ■ Identify one person per month who will check in going forward.
6 Months	Chaplain Command staff	■ Mark the date — do not let it pass without contact. ■ Bring something: food, a card, a presence. ■ Ask the family: is there anything the department should know? ■ Review the follow-up plan — who's still connected? ■ Check in with children specifically at this milestone.
1 Year	Chaplain Chief / Sheriff Department	■ The first anniversary is significant. Plan ahead. ■ Reach out before the date — not the day of. ■ Consider a small department acknowledgment or gesture. ■ Send a handwritten note from command staff. ■ Ask the family what meaningful acknowledgment looks like to them. ■ Reset the calendar for Year Two.

FOR THE DEPARTMENT

■ Say the officer's name at roll call — regularly, not just once.

■ Allow officers space to grieve without performance.

■ Make chaplain access easy — no appointment required.

KEEP THE CIRCLE STRONG

■ Assign one person to hold the remembrance calendar.

■ Review survivor contact every six months: who has drifted?

■ Include children's milestones in the department calendar.

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- Watch for officers who start to pull away.
- Acknowledge the fallen at department events by name.
- Keep the family in the loop on memorials and honors.
- Invite survivors to Police Week and memorial events.
- Build acknowledgment into department culture — not as ceremony, but as ordinary, repeated decency.

"Grief should pull a community closer, not scatter it. That is where police chaplains have authority." — Survivor Network