

## Questions from Oversight Re: Grief Booklets

1. How are they delivered? By mail, in person etc.?

They were delivered by mail.

2. Please explain any other contact the agency has with individuals that receive the booklets (i.e. phone call, attached letter etc.)

Nothing else in the context of the booklets. There is a sympathy card from the colonel of the Highway Patrol that accompanies the initial booklet as well as an information card regarding the Families of Highway Fatalities group (see attached). There would be contact by the Patrol as part of the investigation.

3. When did the practice of providing booklets with information on grieving to families impacted by traffic fatalities begin and what was the initial reasoning or goal in implementing this practice?

In June 2016. The department already provides a Compassionate Guide, which is distributed by the trooper around the time of notification. This provides information about steps to take in the immediate period following the death of the family member, including helpful checklists and resources (see attached). The department has been providing the Compassionate Guide for around 10 years. The "A Time To Grieve" booklets were a suggestion of our chaplaincy and were used as an additional resource for grieving families. The extra step of providing these booklets was simply another avenue to show compassion to these families and help them through this devastating time in their lives.

4. What was involved when deciding what material to include in the booklet?

These booklets are separate from our Compassionate Guide, which was created in-house. We did not author the "A Time To Grieve" publications. We simply purchased them because they offer helpful information as families navigate the various stages of the grieving process.

5. Recently, there was an objection by someone who received the booklet. Since the practice of sending the booklets started, what type of feedback has the agency received?

This was the first feedback we had received on this particular material.

6. Has the agency communicated with the individual who recently had an objection to determine if the entire practice of sending the booklet was objectionable or whether it was just certain information included in the booklet that was objectionable?

The individual did not communicate directly with the department rather filed a complaint with the American Humanist Association who then sent a letter to Director Leroy Smith and a press release to state media outlets. The individual wished to remain anonymous so we were not told the person's identity.

7. Is it possible to revise the agency's practice so the agency can continue to achieve what was intended when the practice started, while not offending those who may receive the booklets?

On the advice of our attorneys, the department felt that this issue transcended a single complaint and potentially had broader legal implications regarding the separation of church and state. Additionally, the booklets are delivered unsolicited to the recipients' homes, which seemed to be an additional hurdle for us. Therefore, we do not believe that there is an avenue to continue with these particular booklets without exposing the agency to unnecessary and expensive litigation.

8. How much does it cost, per booklet/package that is sent?

In addition to the cost of the booklet, it is about .70 for each package for postage.

9. How many were purchased in total and what was the total cost?

Journeying through Grief Book Sets:

1000 sets at \$5.95 a set.

\$6,426 – total

\$4,320 – State Funds

\$2,106 – Miscellaneous Funds

10. What was the source of the funds?

The booklets were paid for out of our regular budget, as well as miscellaneous funds for fees collected from the sale of collision data.

11. How many booklets does the agency have remaining?

- Book #1 = appx. 534 – 466 have been mailed out
- Book #2 = appx. 741 – 259 have been mailed out
- Book #3 = appx. 923 – 77 have been mailed out
- Book #4 = appx. 1,000 – none have been mailed out

12. How are the materials the agency provided to the families of those who pass away in traffic accidents similar or different than the materials 1) the agency provides families of agency officers who pass away in the line of duty and 2) the military provides the families of soldiers who pass away in the line of duty?

This same series of books goes to employees (civilian and uniform) covered by the chaplaincy at SCLEAP i.e. SCDPS, SLED, Probation, Pardon and Parole. SCDPS does not fund these. These books are funded by a nonprofit through SCLEAP and are not paid for through state funds.

We would not have any involvement in what the military distributes. However, one of the SCLEAP chaplains inquired about this with the Casualty Office at Ft. Jackson and they distribute a booklet called "The Days Ahead."

13. What are the agency officers trained and allowed to do to console a grieving family member or friends at the scene of accident?

Typically, the family members would not be on scene unless they were a passenger. The trooper would attempt to console/calm family members who may be on scene and would try to call for another family member/clergy. The trooper supports the coroner during notification at the family's residence.