

## Enhance the system to provide support services to families and members

FDNY's support services to families and members include notifying specified emergency contacts of a Department member who is injured, killed or missing on duty, and providing counseling services to affected families and other Department members. These are important priorities for the Department. Traditionally, the FDNY support infrastructure was established to function in incidents with few casualties. This system was sufficient before September 11. The events of that day created a need for family and member support services vastly greater than the capabilities of the existing system. As a result, we recommend that the Department establish a flexible infrastructure and process that enables it to provide these services efficiently and reliably should such a large-scale need ever arise again.

The foundation of this new system will be a Support Services Committee that will create and manage the new system. The committee should be a permanent, cross-functional group. It should be comprised of one senior representative from each of the following FDNY bureaus and groups: Fire Operations, EMS Operations, Bureau of Health Services (Counseling), Family Assistance, Personnel, the MAP Group, and Technology. An appointee of the Commissioner and the Chief of Department should lead it.

The committee would be responsible for creating and maintaining the necessary infrastructure, including up-to-date emergency contact names for all FDNY personnel, lists of peer counselors, and information on specialized service providers that could be activated by the Department in different scenarios. It should also ensure that the necessary communications infrastructure is put in place to carry out support services in case of large incidents.

The committee would also define and supervise the process used to provide family and member support services, including deployment plans for FDNY personnel and external personnel resources. It would act as a central point of contact for internal and external inquiries related to support services and it would mobilize quickly to manage family and member support services during a large-scale incident.

Over the last two months, an internal FDNY taskforce has started to develop guidelines for the emergency activation of the Support Services Committee, family notification, external communications (e.g., answering phone calls during

and immediately after large-scale incidents), peer counseling and family counseling.

We recommend that the Support Services Committee complete these guidelines and immediately develop and deploy detailed, well documented procedures. We believe these procedures could be completed and deployed within four months. As it further develops the guidelines, the committee should seek input from the Family Advisory Board and the unions.