

# Telling a Tragedy

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## *A bereaved parent provides insight*

*Most police officers, at some point in their career, are called upon to advise a next-of-kin of the death of a loved one. None relish the task, probably because they feel inadequate to do the job. They grope for words or actions which will assist the next-of-kin in accepting the dreadful news they deliver.*

*Have officers ever wondered how they did? Have they ever wondered what the recipient of the news felt about the manner in which the message was delivered?*

*Knowing the answers to these questions should help all officers to understand the dynamics of the situation and how best to inform the next-of-kin, the next time they are asked.*

*In the following article, a mother writes of her experience when two police officers told her of the unexpected death of her son, and suggests what each officer might do to make the best of these difficult situations.*

Death should come in a graceful, dignified fashion to one who has lived a full and rich life of many, many decades. As we know, this is not often the case. Nor does death come in clean, white hospital beds surrounded by loved ones, clergy, doctors and nurses. All too often, it comes suddenly, violently and rudely. That, of course, is when the police become involved.

One of my worst fears, as a young mother, was that "something" would