

CHAPTER 08

17 IN THIS VOLUME

The Long Night.

VIGIL COORDINATOR

The vigil is the community's moment — the evening gathering when the neighborhood, the officer's circle, and the broader law-enforcement family come together to grieve.

The Vigil Coordinator delivers a service that honors the officer, comforts the family, and creates a space where thousands of people — many of whom will never meet the family — can show up and pay respect together. It may be held at the mortuary, the home church, a civic plaza, or the station itself.

Plan for a bigger crowd than you expect. Community vigils routinely draw twice the anticipated number. Overflow seating, standing room, and extra candles are cheap insurance. Outdoor vigils live or die by the weather plan.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE – FROM AGENCIES WHO HAVE DONE THIS

- 01 **Let clergy lead.** The vigil belongs to the spiritual life of the family and community. Make it easy for the clergy and the music to do their work.
- 02 **Plan for a bigger crowd than you expect.** Community vigils routinely draw twice the anticipated number. Overflow seating, standing room, and extra candles are cheap insurance.
- 03 **Protect the family's exit.** The hardest moment for the family is leaving the room. Have transportation staged, pathway clear, an officer who walks with them from pew to vehicle.
- 04 **Walk music transitions carefully.** The moment between spoken word and music is where most vigils stumble.
- 05 **Outdoor vigils live or die by the weather plan.** Have an indoor plan, a tent plan, and battery-operated candles in reserve.
- 06 **Archive the livestream for the family.** A clean recording, delivered afterward, is one of the kindest gifts the department can give.
- 07 **End the service cleanly, then hold space.** After the formal close, do not rush anyone out. People need a moment to be with each other.

MODERN CONSIDERATIONS • 2026

- **Livestream the vigil.** Family decision. If yes: platform chosen, password or public, captions enabled, archive delivered.
- **Battery-operated candles.** Preferred for crowds, children, windy conditions; paper sleeves optional for the traditional look.
- **Drone airspace.** Coordinate with local agencies and news outlets for outdoor vigils.
- **Accessibility.** ASL interpreter, closed captions on livestream, hearing-loop if available.
- **Smart-device quiet zone.** In the family room and reserved seating area.

TURN THE PAGE FOR THE CHECKLIST →

CHECKLIST 08 • HONORING THE FALLEN

Vigil Coordinator checklist.

A working one-page reference. Begin at first assignment; complete through service close.

PRE-VIGIL

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| ☐ Confirm date, time, venue with Funeral Coordinator and clergy. | ☐ Confirm order of service and music. |
| ☐ Walk the venue (staging, family seating, candle distribution, exit). | ☐ Confirm transportation for the family. |
| ☐ Confirm Honor Guard detail and rotation. | ☐ Pre-stage candles, luminaries, programs. |
| ☐ Confirm weather contingency for outdoor vigils. | ☐ Coordinate livestream with PIO. |

ROLES & DISPLAY

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| ☐ Clergy and contact confirmed. | ☐ Honor Guard supervisor named. |
| ☐ Family Liaison and Funeral Coordinator present. | ☐ Music and singer coordinators present. |
| ☐ Usher supervisor on site. | ☐ Casket / national flag treatment confirmed. |
| ☐ Photographs and ceremonial items per family wishes. | ☐ Video tribute prepared and tested. |

CROWD & CONTINGENCIES

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| ☐ Reserved seating for immediate family confirmed. | ☐ Reserved seating for extended family, command, sister agencies. |
| ☐ Overflow / standing-room plan. | ☐ ADA seating verified. |
| ☐ Traffic / crowd control on site. | ☐ Ushers needed for venue layout. |
| ☐ Candles, luminaries, fire-safety briefing complete. | ☐ Cleanup plan post-vigil. |