

POLICE DEPARTMENT

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 9, 2021

SUBJECT: *Employee Wellness*

Section 1: Peer Support

PURPOSE:

The Peer Support program is committed to enhancing resiliency of staff by educating, influencing and assisting staff to invest in themselves to ensure stability and longevity in their personal and professional lives. The Peer Support Team will develop and support sustainable programs to impact officer wellness and longevity.

MISSION:

The mission of the PST is to offer safe, non-judgmental and private assistance to all consortium agency employees in times of personal need or due to the unique experiences of this career. The PST works to provide proactive support to peers to enhance overall employee well-being, including mental, physical, social, and spiritual wellness. The PST does not replace psychological treatment but can facilitate pathways to professional help through the city Employee Assistance Program (EAP). PST members may provide additional support during traumatic events and critical incidents with the guidance of approved mental health professionals, which may be agency specific.

DEFINITIONS:

A. Peer Support Team:

1. A team lead by a Peer Support sergeant *or* other first line supervisor and staffed by trained members of the police department who provide support to police department and consortium members.
2. Peer Support Team members are not counselors or therapists.
3. May provide day-to-day support, referrals to mental health professional(s), provide support during traumatic events and critical incidents, augment Employee Assistance Programs (EPA) and other outreach programs that support staff well-being.
4. The Peer Support Team members and approved mental health providers *shall not* conduct fitness for duty evaluations.

B. Consortium:

1. The Peer Support Team Consortium consists of [listed] police departments.

C. Approved Metal Health Professional:

1. A licensed mental healthcare provider who has undergone the approval process with the police department and has established a current contract with the police department, which includes the City's Employee Assistance Program.
2. The mental health providers ***shall not*** conduct fitness for duty evaluations.
3. A list of current contracted mental healthcare providers will be maintained by the support sergeant or assigned team administrator from each consortium agency if applicable.
4. The approved mental health professional's role within the Peer Support Team will be determined by each agency.

PRIVACY:

- A. Information discussed in PST interactions is private and protected by MN State Statutes 181.9731, 181.9732, and 13.43 Subd. 9 & 9a, and not subject to disclosure by PST members, even at the request of police department administration, supervisors, or fellow peer support team members with the following exceptions:
1. the peer support counselor reasonably believes the disclosure is necessary to prevent harm to self by the person in receipt of public safety peer counseling or to prevent the person from harming another person, provided the disclosure is only for the purpose of preventing the person from harming self or others and limited to information necessary to prevent such harm;
 2. the person receiving public safety peer counseling discloses information that is required to be reported under the mandated reporting laws, including, but not limited to the reporting of maltreatment of minors under section 626.556 and the reporting of maltreatment of vulnerable adults under section 626.557, provided the disclosure is only for the purpose of reporting maltreatment and limited to information necessary to make such a report; the person who received public safety peer counseling provides written consent authorizing disclosure of the information;
 3. the emergency service provider who received public safety peer counseling is deceased and the surviving spouse or administrator of the estate of the deceased emergency service provider gives written consent authorizing disclosure of the information; or
 4. the emergency service provider who received public safety peer counseling voluntarily testifies, in which case the peer support counselor may be compelled to testify on the same subject.
- B. Due to the sensitive nature of information shared, Peer Support Team members will sign a confidentiality agreement when assigned to the Peer Support Team and may be dismissed from the peer support role for any breach of the confidentiality agreement, behavior that violates trust, agency policy violations that would violate trust, failure to attend training or loss of good standing with their agency.

ADMINISTRATION:

- A. Peer Support sergeant or other first line supervisor will be the highest rank held by an agency's Peer Support Team.

- B. Anonymous statistical information may be recorded regarding utilization of peer support and may be collected by the peer support committee for the consortium. Information that could identify staff members **shall not** be collected.
- C. Peer Support Team members are selected by a process determined by each agency and report to the Peer Support Sergeant or first line supervisor of their respective department.
- D. When cross agency peer-to-peer support is provided and further resources are needed or requested, staff should be referred to their city's or agency's EAP, approved mental health professional, or resourced list of mental health professionals approved by the consortium coordinator's group.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES:

- A. Peer Support Team members will be available to provide support, guidance, and resources to any police department staff in need. Members of the Peer Support Team are not mental health professionals, but specially trained to provide support to fellow members of the police department.
- B. Any staff of the department may be referred to the PST in a number of ways including:
 - 1. Self-referral: Any staff of the police department may seek PST services.
 - 2. Supervisor-referral: A staff of the police department may be referred to the PST by a supervisor or peer. The department staff is under **no obligation** to contact the PST based on this suggestion.
- C. It is up to each agency to define the rules of their program for staff involved in active Internal Affairs Investigations. It is recommended that the PST member caution staff involved in Internal Affairs investigations about sharing information about an investigation or incident during peer-to-peer counselling.
- D. Staff involved in active Critical Incident or Internal Affairs Investigations should not seek out peer support outside of their agency's peer support Peer Support Team. Staff involved in active Critical Incident or Internal Affairs Investigation may utilize the support services of their City EAP programs or the approved mental health professional if available.
- E. Peer Support Team members will be provided with an optional leave of absence from the Peer Support Team when personal issue or obligations require it. The length of leave is up to each individual agency.

Section 2: Mental Health Check In

POLICY

The [City] Police Department is committed to supporting the emotional health of all employees by providing them with resources that will help ensure stability and longevity in the personal and professional lives of each employee. It is the policy of the [City] Police Department to provide employees with cost-free services from mental health professionals that specialize in working with first responders. This service is intended to supplement the City's EAP and health and wellness programs.

DEFINITIONS

Approved Mental Health Professional: A licensed mental healthcare provider who has been approved by the chief of police and has established a current contract or working relationship with the department.

PROCEDURE

The annual Mental Health Check-in program provides employees with access to qualified mental health professionals contracted by the police department. The program is administered using the following guidelines:

- A. The program is mandatory for both sworn and non-sworn full-time and part-time employees. Spouses, family members and significant others are not included, but may qualify for services under the city's employee assistance program.
- B. Employees must complete an annual check-in session in one of the following ways:
 - 1. Meet with the contracted mental health professional.
 - 2. Meet with one of the other vetted, first responder trained mental health professionals. The department will maintain a list of vetted and approved mental health professionals.
 - 3. Employees may choose to visit their own licensed mental health professional for their annual check-in session. If an employee decides to use an alternate licensed mental health professional, they must complete a Release of Information form that allows their licensed mental health provider to confirm with the contracted mental health professional that the annual check-in has been completed.
- C. When an employee selects an approved mental health professional for the annual mental health check-in, the cost of the session will be paid for by the department.
- D. When an employee selects their own licensed mental health professional for the annual mental health check-in, the cost of the session is the responsibility of the employee.
- E. Employees may request, or the mental health professional may suggest, additional sessions. These additional sessions are not mandatory.
- F. The department will cover the cost of up to five additional sessions with an approved mental health professional for each employee per calendar year.
- G. The employee is responsible for costs beyond the five additional sessions.
- H. The approved mental health professional shall not conduct fitness for duty evaluations.
- I. Annual mental health check-in sessions with the approved mental health professionals will be billed anonymously, per the agreement with the provider.
- J. Each employee will be protected under HIPAA through informed consent provided by the approved mental health professional.
- K. The approved mental health provider shall be prohibited from sharing any employee information, other than to confirm that an employee was compliant with this policy by the end of the calendar year.