

Peer Support Program

Section 1-24

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POLICY

The Police Department is committed to enhancing resiliency by educating, influencing and assisting officers and 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. The Peer Support Team will aim to positively impact physical & mental health, financial stability, nutrition, and spiritual support through the chaplain program.

PURPOSE

To establish a peer support team (PST) to offer safe, non-judgmental and private assistance to all department members in times of personal need. Members will also provide support during and after a critical incident with the guidance of our contracted mental health professional(s). The PST does not replace psychological treatment but can facilitate pathways to professional help through the city employee assistance program and/or through referral to a culturally competent mental health professional.

PROCEDURES

1-24.1 Definitions

- A. Peer Support Team:
1. A team lead by a sergeant and staffed by trained peer support counselors who are members of the department. The sergeant should work in conjunction with contracted mental health provider(s) to oversee the operation of the team in accordance of established best practices.
 2. May provide day-to-day support, referral to mental health professional, and support during traumatic events and critical incidents
 3. Team members will develop and implement wellness programs that support staff well-being.
 4. Members are selected by a competitive process and report to the Peer Support Sergeant. The contracted mental health provider(s) may be involved in the selection process.

5. The peer support team members *do not* conduct fitness for duty evaluations.
6. Members of the team should hold the rank of sergeant and below.

B. Approved Mental Health Professional:

1. A mental health provider who has undergone the approval process with police department administration and established a contract with the city. Approved providers may include participants within the City Employee Assistance Program
2. The mental health providers do not conduct fitness for duty evaluations.
3. A list of current contracted mental healthcare providers will be maintained by the team sergeant

1-24.2 Privacy

- A. Information discussed in PST interactions is private and protected by MN statutes 181.9731, 181.9732 and 13.43 Subd. 9 & 9a and not subject to disclosure by PST members, even at the request of 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 chapter 260E 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;
 3. The person who received public safety peer counseling provides written consent authorizing disclosure of the information;
 4. 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
 5. 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 the information shared Peer Support Team members may be dismissed from the peer support role for any breach of confidentiality, behavior that violates trust, agency policy violations that would violate trust, failure to attend training or loss of good standing within the department.

1-24.3 Operational Guidelines

- A. In general, team members will be available to provide support, guidance, and resources to any department member in need. Peer support counselors are not mental health professionals, but specially trained to provide support to fellow members of the department.
- B. Any member of the department may be referred to the PST in a number of ways including: self-referral or supervisor-referral.
 - a. Self-referral: Any member of the department may seek PST services by simply contacting any member of the PST.
 - b. Supervisor-referral: A member of the department may be referred to the PST by a supervisor who believes the employee may benefit from interaction with the PST. The department member is under no obligation to contact the PST based on this suggestion.
- C. Any department member involved in a critical incident and/or internal affairs investigation may utilize the support services of the Mental Health Professional or uninvolved members of the PST should the need arise. However, it is recommended that the PST member caution staff involved in the investigation to follow any order or directive prohibiting communication with other department members about the specifics of the investigation or incident.

1-24.4 Peer Support Response to Critical Incident

The Chief of Police or Division Captain should activate the Peer Support Team to provide care and resources for the effected members of the department. The PST member providing public safety peer counseling should not be an “involved” or “witness” officer as defined by department policy. See department policy 1-23, *Critical Incidents: Investigation*.

FORMS

None