



TALLAHASSEE POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS

 Proudly Policing Since 1841	SUBJECT Peer Support Program		 Nationally Accredited 1986
	CHIEF OF POLICE <i>Signature on file</i>		
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AUTHORITY/RELATED REFERENCES

FS 111.09, Peer support for first responders
 General Order 54, Stress Management
 General Order 73, Chaplain Program
 General Order 90, Wellness Program

KEY WORD INDEX

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POLICY

The Department acknowledges that members are often exposed to traumatic events that can lead to mental and emotional distress. The Department will provide the opportunity to receive confidential resources of support and assistance through times of personal and professional distress.

DEFINITIONS

Affiliated First Responder Organization: Organizations including, but not limited to regularly organized volunteer firefighting departments or associations, regularly organized volunteer ambulance services, combination fire departments, as that term is defined in FS 633.135(1).

Critical Incident: An unusual occurrence, whether accidental, natural, or intentionally caused, which results or may result in substantial injury or harm to the public or substantial

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damage to or loss of property. Examples include, but are not limited to hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, civil disturbances, active threats (active shooter), explosions, major fires, and aircraft or train accidents.

First Responder Peer: A person who is not a health care practitioner, has experience working as or with a first responder, including active, volunteer, and retired first responders, regarding any physical or emotional conditions or issues associated with the first responder's employment. This person has designated by the first responder's employing agency or affiliated first responder organization to provide peer support as provided in this section and has received training for this purpose, per FS 111.09

Peer Support: The provision of physical, moral, or emotional support to a first responder by a first responder peer for the purpose of addressing physical or emotional conditions or other issues associated with being a first responder.

Peer Support Communication: Electronic, oral, or written communication, made with a mutual expectation of confidentiality while a team member is providing peer support in his or her official capacity.

Peer Support Team: A group of Department members with specialized training who lend support to Department members experiencing trauma and/or stress in their personal and/or professional lives.

Peer Support Team Member (Team Member): An officer, civilian employee, or volunteer of the Department who has been trained in peer support skills and has been selected for the Peer Support Team.

Peer Team Lead: Approved by the Team Facilitator, the Team Lead will provide consultation and support to team members as needed, and any other duties asked by the Team Facilitator to support team success.

Team Facilitator: The Behavioral Wellness Coordinator serves as the Team Facilitator. The facilitator shall oversee program logistics and sustainment, and will coordinate peer team activation for critical incidents, and daily program logistics. They will provide consultation and support to the Team Leads and team members, as needed. Assume any other duties necessary including training and collecting monthly utilization data. The Team Facilitator should be a licensed mental health professional who is qualified to provide consultation to the Peer Support Team.

PROCEDURES

I. SERVICES OFFERED AND ACCESS

- A. The support services offered through the peer support program shall include, but are not limited to:

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1. Mental and emotional support through one-on-one discussions,
 2. Pre-incident education,
 3. Spousal/significant other support,
 4. Referral support,
 5. On-scene support, and
 6. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- B. The Peer Support Team remains bound by its training and commitment to make decisions in the best interest of the members of the department. Peer Support is not a substitute for psychotherapy.
- C. Whenever possible, on-duty Team Members will be called before any off-duty Team Members are authorized to be called in.
- D. Any member may access the Peer Support Team (PST). The Team Facilitator or Team Leaders will be available for crisis consultation and/or response 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A member may access the Peer Support Team by the following methods:
1. Self-referral – A member may recognize the need for assistance and choose a specific team member to reach out to. An up-to-date Peer Support Team Member list is available on the TPD SharePoint page.
 2. Indirect Referral – A concerned colleague, supervisor, family member, or friend may communicate to the Peer Support Team Facilitator, or Peer Support Team Lead for a Peer member to reach out.
- E. Regardless of the method of referral, Team Members are required to contact the referred member within 24 hours of the request unless there are extenuating circumstances approved by the Team Facilitator.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM MEMBERS

A. Team Facilitator

1. Functions as the primary liaison between Team Members and the Chief of Police or designee.

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2. Maintains records of current Team Members and continuously seeks out those employees who would qualify as a Team Member. The records are to be kept secured at all times.
3. A supervisor may call on the Team Facilitator to ask advice or for contact information for referral of an employee to a Team Member

B. Team Lead

1. Works in partnership with the Team Facilitator to coordinate activation for critical incidents,
2. Provides Consultation and support to Team Members as needed,
3. May facilitate Peer Support training and provide consult to other Team Members,
4. Assumed any other duties deemed necessary to support the program and team.

C. Team Member

1. Provide short-term supportive assistance and or referral within the scope of their ability, knowledge and training, and may make additional referral for assistance when deemed appropriate.
2. Team Members will notify participants seeking assistance that they are not exempt from laws, rules, regulations, directives or orders, but that any exchange of information not in violation of the above will remain confidential.
3. Participants will be advised that any acts or threats of self-injury or injury to others cannot go unreported. Any other party seeking information about discussions shared between a participant and a Team Member will be informed that such information is confidential.
4. Team Members will maintain contact with the Team Facilitator regarding program activities and statistical contact data for purposes of program evaluation. Team Members will maintain a confidential record of types of incidents reported for the purposes of determining the best resources that can be provided to help Department employees.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY

- A. The Peer Support Program is a confidential program for all members.
- B. Any first responder utilizing this program is entitled to the confidentiality provided by FS 111.09:

A first responder peer may not divulge information from or testify about a peer support communication in a civil, criminal, administrative, or disciplinary proceeding, unless:

1. The first responder peer is a defendant in a civil, criminal, administrative, or disciplinary proceeding arising from a complaint filed by the first responder who was a party to the peer support communication, in which case such information may be divulged but is limited to the scope of the proceeding,
 2. The first responder who was a party to the peer support communication agrees, in writing, to allow the first responder peer to testify about or divulge information related to the peer support communications,
 3. Based on the peer support communications, the first responder peer suspects that the first responder who was a party to the peer support communications has committed a criminal act or intends to commit a criminal act. There is no liability on the part of, and no cause of action of any nature may arise against, the first responder peer for disclosing information under this paragraph, or
 4. There are articulable facts or circumstances that would lead a reasonable, prudent person to fear for the safety of the first responder who was a party to the peer support communication, another person, or society, and the first responder peer communicates the information only to a potential victim and law enforcement or other appropriate authorities. There is no liability on the part of, and no cause of action of any nature may arise against, the first responder peer for disclosing information under this paragraph.
- C. Any communication made to a Peer Support Team Member may potentially be discoverable by third parties but will not be used by the Department as or in support of any form of corrective action, discipline or for any form of labor advocacy absent the exceptions contained within this Policy.
 - D. The Peer Support Team is not an investigative unit of the Department. Therefore, it will not be the policy or practice of the Department to interfere with or question Peer Support Team Members or any other participant involved in a Peer Support Team meeting, debriefing or defusing concerning the content of such discussions without the participant's consent.

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- E. Any record kept by the team shall not include any information that can identify the member using the program.
- F. All Team Members will sign a Peer Team Agreement, which includes confidentiality requirements, prior to their active participation in the Peer Support Program. All peer team documents will be retained in the Team Member's personnel file.
- G. The Peer Support Team will adhere to confidentiality, and its limitations specified in the Peer Team Agreement. If the Facilitator, Team Lead, or Peer is notified of a potential breach of confidentiality or conduct unbecoming of a peer shall be handled as outlined in General Order 29 (Internal Affairs and Administrative Investigations).
- H. If confidentiality must be broken, the Team Member will:
 - 1. If safe to do so, discuss with the receiving member the need to break confidentiality,
 - 2. Assess if law enforcement action is immediately necessary and take appropriate action.
 - 3. Notify the Team Facilitator or designee of the situation, when safe to do so,
 - 4. The Team Facilitator shall immediately notify their direct supervisor and brief them on the situation.

IV. INCIDENT ACTIVATION

- A. Certain incidents shall necessitate a Peer Team activation for immediate response. The Watch Commander (or designee) shall notify the Team Facilitator, or designee, for the following events:
 - 1. Line of Duty Death or Serious Bodily Injury,
 - 2. Officer Involved Action resulting in Serious Injury or Death,
 - 3. Employee-involved traffic crashes in which any occupant(s) are critically injured or killed,
 - 4. All mass casualty, active shooter, or disaster events (e.g., plane crash, natural disaster, multiple loss of life), and
 - 5. Traumatic or unexpected death of the spouse or child of an employee.

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- B. The following incidents may necessitate a notification by a Sergeant to the Team Facilitator, or designee, via email group TPDPEERLEAD@talgov.com:
 - 1. Any death or major injury of a child,
 - 2. Grievous bodily harm or death of a person(s) through trauma, including suicide, when the act was witnessed by department member, or
 - 3. Arrest of agency employee.
- C. The Watch Commander may notify the Team Facilitator, or designee, for any situation they deem necessary.

V. MEMBER QUALIFICATION, SELECTION AND REMOVAL

- A. Department members must have two or more continuous years of service with the Department and be in good standing to be considered for the Peer Support Team.
- B. A screening selection process shall be followed for team members:
 - 1. Team Members will be selected by the Team Facilitator in coordination with Team Leads to participate in the program.
 - 2. The Team Facilitator reserves the right to interview any interested member prior to their selection.
 - 3. The Team Facilitator will ensure any interested members are in good standing within the Department.
- C. Prior to assignment, all Team Members must sign a Confidentiality Statement and be required to successfully complete all program training requirements.
- D. In the event a Team Member fails to adequately participate in the Peer Support Program requirements, the Team Facilitator may hold a meeting with the Team Member for consideration of removal.
- E. In the event a Team Member fails to follow the provisions of the Confidentiality Agreement, they shall be removed from the team and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- F. Removal from the Peer Support Team may be conducted as follows:
 - 1. A member may resign.

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2. A member may be removed at the recommendation of the member's chain of command, administration, or the Team Facilitator.
 3. At the discretion of the Chief of Police.
- G. Command Staff members and members assigned to the Internal Affairs Unit will not be assigned as Peer Support Members.

VI. TRAINING

- A. A Team Member is required to meet the following minimum training requirements to keep their team status:
1. All Team Members will complete an initial training curriculum approved by the Team Facilitator before functioning within their role as a Team Member.
 2. To retain a position on the Peer Support Team, a Tam Member will be required to complete a minimum of three continuing education sessions annually.
 3. Team Members who wish to participate in a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing will complete advanced training specific to critical incident stress debriefing best practices and agency protocols.
 4. The Peer Support Program will meet quarterly, at a minimum, or at the discretion of the Team Facilitator. Attendance at these meetings will be mandatory unless excused by the Team Facilitator.

VII. OUTSIDE AGENCY ASSISTS

- A. The Chief of Police may, upon the request of an agency or organization, authorize the Peer Support Team Facilitator to approve Peer Support Team members to provide service to other agencies.
- B. The Peer Support Team Facilitator must prepare an operational plan including details on the type of response and the designated Peer Support Team members assisting for approval by the Chief of Police or designee.

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