

GENERAL ORDER 13.7

Peer Support

GENERAL ORDER CROSS-REFERENCE: None

SUMMARY

Describes the Springfield Police Department Peer Support Program.

DISCUSSION

The Springfield Police Department recognizes that employees encounter situations which may result in their suffering emotional or psychological trauma. The Springfield Police Department shall assist its members to understand the impact of such incidents by providing nonprofessional peer support services and/or referral information for professional counseling.

POLICY

I

It is the policy of the Springfield Police Department to offer assistance to employees when the employee has been involved in or exposed to a critical incident. Support may also be offered in times of personal or professional crises, including but not limited to crises caused by cumulative job-related stress, and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties that may affect work performance or personal life circumstances. This assistance may be in the form of peer support services provided by the Springfield Police Department Peer Support Program, or if appropriate, referring employees to counseling services or other assistance deemed beneficial or necessary by the employee or peer support team.

If appropriate, other agency teams or members may be used for assistance.

Peer support is subject to confidentiality requirements per ORS 181A.835 and any information shared peer to peer through this program is lawfully privileged and shall remain confidential, except as required by Oregon Revised Statute.

II

Definitions are as follows:

Peer Support Program: A team of voluntary and designated sworn and/or non-sworn department employees trained to respond to critical incidents or provide support for personal crisis. The group will utilize additional resources as necessary; other department chaplain(s), local clergy, contracted Peer Support organizations such as Responder Life Peer Support Liaison and mental health professionals, etc.

Confidentiality: Statements or comments made in a Peer Support environment are protected conversations under Oregon Revised Statutes 181A.835. Statements made shall not be discussed with anyone outside the Peer Support environment, unless there is imminent danger to others or self, child or elder abuse, or criminal activity is revealed.

Statements or comments made to a licensed chaplain are protected conversations under Oregon Revised Statutes 40.260 Clergy/Penitent Privilege.

Critical Incident: Any situation faced by department personnel that may cause an employee to experience unusually strong emotional or physical reactions which have the potential to interfere with the employees' ability to function properly either at work or off-duty. Critical Incidents may involve; line of duty deaths or injury, suicide of a co-worker, mass causality incidents, officer involved shootings or significant events involving children.

Crisis: A set of personal or professional circumstances that adversely impact the emotional health of a Department employee, an employee's family member, or work group. A crisis may be a result of an employee or an employee's family member being involved in a critical incident; substance abuse; or marital, relationship, health, family, financial, employment, cumulative effect, or other personal problems.

III

PEER SUPPORT SERVICES

On Scene Support: The team members' function is to observe and assist with signs of acute stress reactions in the personnel immediately involved. Team members offer encouragement, support and education and implement stress management strategies as appropriate.

Defusing: A confidential (ORS 181A.835) group meeting held as soon as feasible after the critical incident. Defusing's are conducted by trained peers, a trained chaplain, or a mental health professional trained in Critical Incident Stress Management. Attendance and participation is voluntary.

If a Peer Support Team Member is involved in the incident, they may conduct the Defusing if an uninvolved Peer Support Team member is not available.

Debriefing: A confidential (ORS 181A.835), structured group meeting with a mental health profession attending. They are conducted by trained peers, a chaplain and a mental health professional. Debriefings are usually held within 48 to 72 hours after the incident and are restricted to only the people exposed to the incident. A debriefing is structured to provide participants the opportunity to process experiences and emotions surrounding a critical incident. CISDs are also educational providing information regarding critical incident stress and potential stress related symptoms, as well as methods to manage these symptoms. It serves to mitigate the stress impact resulting from exposure to a critical incident.

The peer support member's actions and/or critical incident debriefings will not occur if they interfere with any administrative or criminal investigation. It is not the purpose of peer support to discuss anything that would jeopardize an investigation, cause an employee to be disciplined, or cause an employee to admit deliberate violations of the policies or procedures of the Springfield Police Department. CISDs will be delayed until necessary investigations have been completed. CISDs will still be held regardless of the amount of time they have been delayed. Critical incident debriefs for officer-involved deadly force encounters will occur after the prosecutor's review is concluded.

Uninvolved Peer Support Team Members, working with an involved peer, could attend to support their peer should the need for support be acute.

If a Peer Support Team Member is involved in the incident, they should not conduct the Debriefing.

Personnel should be aware that even if they choose to say nothing during a debriefing, their attendance may help a fellow employee. Attending the debriefing and participation is voluntary.

One on One: A one-on-one is a confidential (ORS181A.835) meeting between a trained team member and a staff member or staff member's family. Members may self-refer or refer others to these meetings for intervention. Participation is voluntary.

IV

PEER SUPPORT TEAM ACTIVATIONS

Any supervisory or command personnel may request the response of a peer support team member or members. Team members will be activated as dictated by availability, the incident at hand, and the incident leader's evaluation of that incident.

The following information will be assessed in evaluating the appropriate response:

- Type of incident.
- Location of incident.
- Number/type of personnel involved.
- Number/type of personnel involved.
- Outside agencies involved (e.g. EMS, other LE agencies).
- Time of the incident and amount of time individuals spent on scene.

Examples of circumstances warranting peer support activation:

- Death, severe abuse or severe injury of a baby or child.
- Death or severe injury of an officer or co-worker.
- Survival of a serious life-threatening incident.

- Incident involving a large number of seriously injured people.
- Other potentially distressing incidents.

Personnel may access services by contacting the department's Peer Support Coordinator, the Chaplain, contracted Peer Support organizations such as Responder Life Peer Support Liaison, or any Peer Support Team Member.

Personnel may personally contact any peer team member, the Peer Support Team Coordinator, Contracted Peer Support Liaison, or the Chaplain for referral to either professional counseling or a peer team member.

A family member or associate of any staff member may make a referral, in which case, the member's participation is also voluntary.

Individuals receiving peer support may voluntarily choose to reject a peer team member by using any criteria they believe important.

If rejected, the Peer Support Team Member will advise either the Peer Support Coordinator or the Contracted Peer Support Liaison, so that a second Peer Support Team Member can be assigned.

VI

GUIDELINES FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFINGS

Employees and team members are required to distinguish confidential peer support sessions from casual discussion. A peer support counseling session is a conversation between a team member and an employee seeking support. In order to ensure all benefits of confidentiality, employees and team members will hold sessions in a confidential place and are required to verbally confirm a confidential peer session is underway. This will distinguish confidential sessions from casual discussion.

Prior to having a peer support conversation, the team member will inform participants, of limitations and exceptions regarding the ability to keep confidential the information revealed. The acceptance and overall success of the peer support team will be determined, in part, by the observance of confidentiality. All peer team members must maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned from an individual within the guidelines of ORS 181A.835.

Exceptions include:

Any imminent threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant in a peer support counseling session, or any information conveyed in a peer support counseling session relating to a threat of suicide or homicide.

Any information relating to abuse of children or of the elderly or other information that is required to be reported by law.

Any admission of criminal conduct.

Team members shall refer cases that require professional intervention to a mental health professional or a chaplain. A peer team member, sworn or non-sworn, is a specifically trained colleague, not a counselor or therapist. A peer support program can augment outreach programs, e.g. employee assistance programs and in-house treatment programs, but not replace them. Peer team members may refer staff to other community resources.

Team members should be aware of potentially conflicting peer support relationships.

A peer team member should avoid developing peer support relationships with supervisors or subordinates within their work group or relatives.

Team members should avoid promoting their personal values, moral standards, and philosophies.

Team members who witness an event that may lead to an investigation shall not serve as peer team members for those involved. They may refer the person to another peer team member.

If a staff member who is the subject of an internal investigation, requests peer support, ORS 181A.835 must be followed in this circumstance. In those cases where any questions arise concerning confidentiality, the peer support member should immediately contact the Peer Coordinator who will advise on the appropriate action to be taken.

The role of peer support members in investigative or disciplinary circumstances should be one of support and to assist staff members through stress they may face during the disciplinary process. Peer support team members will not insert themselves into these processes or attempt to shield the peer from consequences of the investigations or disciplinary actions. Their sole role is to provide emotional support. This applies in officer-involved deadly force encounters, where peer support members are further directed not to discuss the underlying force event with involved and witness members.

VII

TEAM COMPOSITION

Peer Support Administrative Sergeant

Duties include at least the following:

- Supervising the program and team members
- Managing training of Peer Support Team Members with Peer Support Coordinator
- Managing expenses and personnel costs associated with the operations of the team
- Act as a liaison between the Peer Support Team and department command staff

Peer Support Coordinator

Duties include at least the following:

- Coordinating training and resources for team members with Contracted Peer Support Liaison and Peer Support Administrative Sergeant
- Maintaining certification of team members
- Coordinating annual review process with Contracted Peer Support Liaison
- Liaison with outside agency organizations

Peer Support Coordinator should be a volunteer and be designated in writing by the Chief or authorized designee.

Contracted Peer Support Liaison

Duties include at least the following:

- Coordinates with the Peer Support Coordinator
- Ensure all employees are aware of the program
- Identify and coordinate training and resources
- Develop resources to assist the Peer Support Team when problems are identified
- Liaison for peer support referrals
- Developing and maintaining referral lists for staff for various issues
- Maintain monthly statistical data of reported contacts by peer support staff for program evaluation purposes.
- Provide assistance to the Peer Support Coordinator with problems or questions regarding the Peer Support Program.
- Back up to the Peer Support Coordinator to ensure a peer support team response to all critical incidents.
- Back up to the Peer Support Coordinator to ensure post incident care occurs. (Defusing's, Debriefing's, etc.)
- Maintaining certification of team members

Team Members

Sworn or non-sworn members of the department. Should be a volunteer and be will be selected based on previous education and training, resolved traumatic experiences, and desirable personal qualities such as maturity, judgment, and personal and professional credibility

Team Members will be designated in writing by Chief or their authorized designee

Family Liaison Members

Should be a volunteer and selected based on their interest and the needs of the team. A brief interview and discussion with the team coordinator and peer support Sergeant will be used in the selection and the onboarding of new family liaison members. The liaison will be provided

training on peer support and critical incident stress management through a contracted Peer Support Liaison organization. The Liaison will be available to serve in a peer capacity to other spouses or immediate family members who may be impacted after a critical incident.

Mental Health Peer Support Advisor

A Mental health professional trained in Critical Incident Stress Management.

VIII

TRAINING

Peer Support Coordinator and Team Members:

- Must attend initial training that meets the industry standard for peer support training for Emergency Service and Public Safety personnel in accordance with ORS 181A.835.
- Must attend at least 50% of all peer support trainings held annually.



Andrew Shearer
Chief of Police