



Atlanta Police Department – Standard Operating Procedure		
	<b>APD.SOP.2025 Peer Support Program</b> <b>Effective Date: November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024</b>	
<b>Chief Darin Schierbaum</b>	<b>Signature by: DS</b>	<b>Date Signed:11/20/2024</b>

**SIGNIFICANT CHANGES**

**APD Staff,**

The Policy and Standards Section is dedicated to providing the department, and its employees, with accurate, understandable and transparent policies. In order to publish policies that reflect the most up-to-date standards, the Policy and Standard Section regularly reviews all policies to ensure that they are reflective of the current mission and objectives of the Atlanta Police Department.

We have updated APD.SOP.2025 Peer Support Program to include the Urgent Care Team – a team of hand-selected, trained, and dedicated individuals who have volunteered to respond and offer on-scene confidential peer support to those of us who are experiencing work-related stress, tragedy or facing personal crises.

We want to highlight that Peer Support Team members are bound by law regarding confidentiality between Law Enforcement Officers and peer counselors. These members are trusted and dedicated to supporting colleagues through difficult times, so that none of us have to fight alone.

If you, or someone you know, is, or has experienced, tragedy or a personal crisis, and would like to talk to a colleague, please reach out to Peer Support at [APDPeerGroup@AtlantaGa.Gov](mailto:APDPeerGroup@AtlantaGa.Gov) for support.

**Thank you and stay informed,**

**Policy and Standards Section**  
**Planning, Research, and Accreditation Unit**



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## **1. PURPOSE**

This directive establishes the Peer Support Program as authorized by OCGA § 24-5-510 and is designed to offer voluntary and confidential support for employees for personal and job-related circumstances.

## **2. POLICY**

The Atlanta Police Department uses its Peer Support Program to assist fellow employees in dealing with work-related stress, emotional difficulties, or other personal circumstances.

## **3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1 Division, section, and unit commanders will monitor the implementation of this directive in their respective commands and ensure that all employees involved in any traumatic incident or critical incident are promptly provided with assistance; should they request it.
- 3.2 The Training Academy Commander will coordinate all professional development of the Peer Support Team and ensure that they are adequately trained in Critical Incident Stress management techniques.
- 3.3 The Peer Support Team is comprised of a coordinator, and a core group of supervisors with two or more years of service.
- 3.4 The Peer Support Team members are employees who are trained to be active listeners. They specialized in different areas of crisis and stress management, and provide feedback to employees, clarify issues, and assist employees in identifying options for problem resolution.
- 3.5 It is the duty and responsibility of every employee to be alert to the need of a colleague to be referred to the program so that timely peer support and/or professional assistance is offered.
- 3.6 Peer Support Team members are not professional therapists. When problems are critical or require professional assistance, information on professional referral resources will be provided to the employee.
- 3.7 An email address on the City network for employees or supervisors has been set up for the program: [APDPeerGroup@Atlantaga.gov](mailto:APDPeerGroup@Atlantaga.gov)
- 3.8 It is the duty of the Program's support administrator to coordinate specialized recommendations to employees involved in critical incidents. The program consists of the following participants:
  - 1. Mental Health Professionals (MHPs);
  - 2. Critical Incidents Support (CIS) or Peer Support Advisory Committee.

## **4. ACTION**

### **4.1 PEER SELECTION**

- 4.1.1 Individuals on the Peer Support Committee are selected at the discretion of the Assistant Chief of Police, or designee.
- 4.1.2 The Peer Support Coordinator is selected at the discretion of the Assistant Chief of Police, or designee.

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- 4.1.3 All Peer Support Committee and Team members are selected based on their character, integrity, interpersonal communication skills and a history of solid decision making and wisdom.
- 4.1.4 Information regarding the candidate's length of service, and performance appraisal ratings and other pertinent background information must be attached to the candidate's eligibility credential and reviewed by the Peer Support Selection Committee.
- 4.1.5 Upon successful completion of Atlanta Police Peer Support Training Course, candidates will serve as Peer Support Team members. These members will then be recommended for ongoing training and supervision under the direction of a Peer Support Coordinator.
- 4.1.6 Peer Support Team members will participate in annual Peer Support Training coordinated by the Peer Support Committee.
- 4.1.7 Peer Support Members will be identified by a Peer Support lapel pin.

#### **4.2 REMOVAL OF MEMBERS**

Peer Support Team members will be removed from the program for failure to maintain the standards for team members.

#### **4.3 PEER SUPPORT SERVICES**

- 4.3.1 Peer Support Team members will be available to employees who request their services both on and off duty. A list of members will be made available to all employees.
- 4.3.2 Peer Support sessions will be confidential.
- 4.3.3 Administrator approval is required for support sessions that will require the team member or employee to leave their assigned duty.
- 4.3.4 Peer Support Team members who engage in unexpected support sessions while off-duty must contact their supervisor as soon as possible for their time to be recorded for compensation purposes.

#### **4.4 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 4.4.1 Peer Support Team members will make no written record of the details of support sessions.
- 4.4.2 Employees who request assistance through the Peer Support Program must be made aware that Peer Support Team members will maintain confidentiality by not disclosing any information developed in peer support sessions, except in accordance with this policy.
- 4.4.3 Peer Support Team members will advise employees prior to any support session that confidentiality will be maintained as provided for in OCGA § 24-5-510. Privileged communications between law enforcement officers and peer counselors, which includes the following exceptions:
  - 1. The disclosure is authorized by the client, or if the client is deceased, by their executor or administrator, and if an executor or administrator is not appointed, by the client's immediate family.
  - 2. Compelled by court order.
  - 3. The Peer Support Team member or Peer Counselor was an initial responding officer, witness, or party to an act that is the subject of the counseling.

4. The communication was made when the Peer Counselor was not performing official duties.
5. The client is charged with a crime.

4.4.4 The privilege created by this State law shall not be grounds to fail to comply with mandatory reporting requirements.

#### **4.5 URGENT CARE TEAM**

4.5.1 The Peer Support Unit's Urgent Care Team (UCT) is a group of Peer Support members, who have been members in good standing for a minimum of one (1) year, that are selected by the Assistant Chief of Police, or designee, to respond to incidents to offer on-scene peer support to affected:

1. Individuals.
2. Groups.
3. Families.

4.5.2 The UCT will serve as liaison to established services, such as but not limited to the:

1. Employee Assistance Program.
2. Public Safety Mental Wellness Services.
3. Chaplaincy Corp.
4. Other Peer Support Member's interaction.

#### **4.6 UCT TRAINING**

4.6.1 UCT Members are required to complete the following training:

Course	Institution
What to Say to Those Considering Suicide	International Association of Chief's of Police
NAMI Homefront	National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI)
Shield of Resilience Training	Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
Assisting Individuals in Crisis & Group Crisis Intervention	International Critical Incident Stress Foundation

4.6.2 UCT members that have not successfully completed Crisis Intervention Training will be required to do before assuming the duties of a UCT member.

#### **4.7 ANNUAL TRAINING**

All UCT Member are required to attend and complete an Annual Training curriculum that is established by the Assistant Chief of Police, or designee, based on the challenges UCT personnel had experienced in the commission of their duties.

#### 4.8 ADVANCE CERTIFICATION

The following courses are required to receive an Advanced Certification as an Urgent Care Team member:

Course	Institution
Hostage Negotiations	Georgia Public Safety Public Center (GPSTC)
Advance Peer Support	Regional Counterdrug Training Academy (RCTA)

#### 4.9 ANNUAL MEMBER EVALUATION

- 4.9.1 All UCT members will be evaluated by the UCT Commander annually. If a member's activities are found to not be up to the standards established in this policy or by UCT Commander, the member will be expelled from the UCT.
- 4.9.2 The UCT Commander will advise the Assistant Chief of Police of any expulsion of a UCT member and the reasons for the action. The Assistant Chief of Police reserves the right to overrule the member's expulsion.

#### 4.10 DRESS CODE

UCT Members will adhere to APD.SOP.2130 Dress Code, Section 4.3.49 Non-uniformed Sworn Employees while performing their on-scene UCT duties if not in uniform.

#### 4.11 UCT VEHICLES

- 4.11.1 Four (4) City vehicles will be assigned by Fleet Management Service and issued to the Urgent Care Team and assigned as follows:
1. The UCT Commander will be provided with a take-home vehicle while assigned the responsibility and role of Commander.
  2. Three (3) City vehicles will be assigned to the Urgent Care Team to remain at headquarters and be utilized during response callouts. Only UCT members are permitted to operate these vehicles.
- 4.11.2 The UCT Vehicles will be maintained in accordance with APD.SOP.3150 Vehicle Management.

#### 4.12 REPORTING

- 4.12.1 Every UCT member is required to complete a UCT Incident Report. This report is an internal report and completely confidential.
- 4.12.2 The following APD personnel are the only employees permitted to view any UCT Incident Reports:
1. The Chief of Police.
  2. The Assistant Chief of Police.
  3. Chief Administrative Officer.

4. Chaplaincy Corp Commander.
5. Urgent Team Commander.
6. Reporting UCT Member.

4.12.3 The UCT Commander is required to report the operations of the UCT quarterly to the Assistant Chief of Police.

## **5. DEFINITION**

Client: a Department employee or a Department employee's immediate family.

Immediate family: a person's spouse, and any child, parent, grandparent, brother, half-brother, sister, or half-sister of the candidate, and the spouses of such persons.

Peer Counselor: a Department employee who has received training to provide emotional and moral support and is designated pursuant to this policy to provide that support.

## **6. CANCELLATIONS**

APD.SOP.2025 Peer Support Groups, effective June 4, 2021.

## **7. REFERENCES**

OCGA § 24-5-510

Privileged communications between law enforcement officers and peer counselors.