

# Asheville Police Department Policy Manual

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## Introduction

The Peer Support Program is a personnel-oriented initiative for the Asheville Police Department that provides internal peer support to employees who have experienced a crisis or critical incident that affects them personally and/or professionally. The program's structure is based on internal criteria rather than individual rank or job title. Peer Support Team members are not professional therapists.

## Policy Statement

The goal of this program is to provide all Asheville Police Department employees, in both sworn and non-sworn roles, with an opportunity for peer support during times of need.

## Definitions

Peer Support Program: a program established within the department to minimize the effects of critical incidents and help employees cope with these incidents through one-on-one peer counseling and larger group debriefings.

Peer Support Team Member: an employee, sworn or non-sworn, who is specifically trained to provide peer support to an employee in need of day-to-day emotional support for department employees and to participate in the department's comprehensive response to traumatic incidents and officer-involved serious incidents.

## Rules and Procedures

### 2007.1 Program Administration

- A. The Peer Support Team comprises a team commander (lieutenant), two (2) team leaders (sworn or non-sworn), and individual team members. The Peer Support Team commander will report to the Patrol Division commander.
- B. The Patrol Division commander is responsible for the overall administration of the Peer Support Program, which includes, but is not limited to:
  - 1. Serving as the liaison between the Team leadership and executive staff.
  - 2. Maintaining communication between the chief of police, executive staff, peer support members, and Responder Support Services.
  - 3. Ensuring the program is implemented and carried forth in accordance with training.
- C. The Peer Support Team commander is responsible for administrative duties such as, but not limited to:
  - 1. Ensuring that proper confidentiality protocols are established and maintained.
  - 2. Ensuring mandatory and approved training is conducted for all team members.
  - 3. Maintaining a twelve (12) month training schedule to be distributed to all team members and their supervisors to minimize scheduling conflicts for the mandatory training.
  - 4. Developing and maintaining awareness among all personnel of the program's availability.
  - 5. Maintaining and publishing an accurate list of peer support team members.
  - 6. Answering questions regarding the peer support program.
- D. The Peer Support team leaders are responsible for:
  - 1. Recommendation of peer support team members.

2. Advising and providing guidance on the parameters of the peer support program.
3. Administration, review, and recommendation of training for peer support team members.
4. [Assisting the team commander with various administrative duties.](#)

### **2007.2 Member Application and Selection**

- A. Peer Support Team members should be employees who are currently in good standing within the department. They must demonstrate a willingness to serve when approached or requested, both on and off duty, attend required meetings and training sessions, and sign a confidentiality agreement.
- B. To have a cross-representation of employees in the peer support program, efforts will be made to maintain peer support team members from various sworn, non-sworn, and volunteer units and ranks throughout the department.
- C. The need to add peer support team members will be determined periodically by the Peer Support Team commander in conjunction with recommendations from the Peer Support [team leaders](#).
- D. Employees may apply for program membership by completing the Peer Support Member Application. A supervisor recommendation form must be completed by members of the employee's chain of command and attached to the application.
- E. Applicants may be required to participate in a selection process.
- F. The final appointment to the program will be approved by the chief of police.

### **2007.3 Member Deselection**

- A. Peer Support Team members may leave the program voluntarily at any time. Peer Support Team members may be removed from the program by the [Patrol](#) Division commander, with approval from the chief of police, for various reasons. Some of these reasons may include, but are not limited to:
  1. Breach of confidentiality.
  2. Failure to attend required training or complete required training hours.
  3. Loss of one's good standing within the department.

### **2007.4 Confidentiality**

- A. One of the most important responsibilities of a Peer Support team member is promoting trust, anonymity, and confidentiality for employees seeking assistance. [N.C. Gen. Stat. § 8-53.10](#) makes communication with a peer

privileged and confidential, and it may be disclosed only in limited circumstances.

- B. Recipients of peer support should be advised at the onset that there is no confidentiality for the following exceptions:
  - 1. When information must be disclosed by law, such as in cases of child abuse or elder abuse, or when the employee reveals that they have committed a crime that presents a clear and immediate danger to themselves or others.
  - 2. When information is revealed that gives reason to believe the employee has violated or conspired to violate a person's civil rights. Federal law ([42 U.S.C. 1986](#)) requires anyone with knowledge of such violations to report them or to be subject to liability for the civil rights violation.
  - 3. When the Peer Support Team member is directed by court order to disclose the information, or is compelled to disclose the information by rules of civil or criminal discovery.
  - 4. When a Peer Support Team member is directly involved in an incident as a participant, witness, or investigator.
- C. Peer Support Team members will stop discussing issues listed in the exceptions and refer employees to another professional resource.
- D. When information described in the exceptions above is revealed during a peer support session, the Peer Support Team member will take the necessary steps to notify the appropriate authority immediately.
- E. Peer Support Team members should consider potential role conflicts and are encouraged not to develop peer support relationships with supervisors, subordinates, or relatives; however, for self-initiated peer referrals, an employee may choose with whom he/she is most comfortable speaking.
- F. Peer Support Team members will not keep written, formal, or private records, including audio or video recordings, of supportive peer relationships.
- G. Supervisors who are Peer Support Team members cannot abdicate their supervisory responsibilities when on duty and confronted with misconduct, disciplinary issues, or other improper employee conduct.
- H. If a Peer Support Team member violates confidentiality for any reason other than those listed above, the Peer Support Team commander will record the violation and recommend termination from the program.

## 2007.5 Training

- A. All Peer Support team members will be trained in group and individual crisis intervention and critical incident stress management courses. This training will be selected by the Peer Support **commander and team leaders** based on current best practices. Training for newly appointed peer support team members should be scheduled at the time of program selection or shortly thereafter.
- B. Newly selected Peer Support Team members will participate in peer-to-peer support only after foundational training is complete.
- C. Training sessions are considered a duty for Peer Support members, who will be excused from their regularly assigned units whenever possible to attend mandatory training. Team members must attend at least **75%** of scheduled team training sessions. **Attendance rosters will be maintained by the Team Commander.**
- D. It is strongly encouraged that each Peer Support team member completes additional training recommended by the Peer Support **commander and team leaders** from a program related to peer support/critical incident training to build skill sets and keep up to date on new techniques. Training course options will be identified by the Peer Support **commander and team leaders** and communicated by the **Patrol** Division Commander to the chief of police or designee for approval.

## 2007.6 Utilization

- A. The department will provide peer support to employees experiencing a personal or professional crisis. Public safety employees are frequently exposed to trauma and critical incidents and may be affected by personal stressors related to their profession.
- B. A Peer Support Team member is a specially trained colleague, not a professional counselor or therapist. Peer Support Team members will be trained to recognize and refer cases that require professional intervention beyond their training.
- C. The Peer Support Program will not replace professional treatment programs, such as Responder Support Services or personal providers, but is available to augment them.

## 2007.7 Referral Procedures

- A. Peer support referrals can come from various sources, including but not limited to:

1. Self-referrals by employees contacting peer Support Team members directly to discuss various concerns.
  2. Peer-initiated referrals are submitted to the Peer Support Team commander **and/or team leaders** by concerned peers, supervisors, or family members. The Peer Support Team Commander **and/or team leaders** may initiate a peer referral and have a peer support team member actively reach out to an employee.
- B. The Peer Support Team commander will publish the names of Peer Support Team members so employees seeking peer support have a list of contacts.
- C. Employees involved in a critical incident may be asked to participate in a group debrief.

#### **2007.8 Assistance to Outside Agencies**

- A. The Peer Support commander **or their designee** will receive and approve requests from outside agencies and notify the team of availability.
1. Team members will receive pay and be authorized to utilize a City of Asheville vehicle for transportation. All appropriate paperwork will be completed.
- B. The Peer Support Team will be responsible for sending outreach to other agencies.

By order of:



Jackie Stepp  
Interim Chief of Police