

ASHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY MANUAL

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CONTENTS

ASSOCIATED DIRECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

POLICY STATEMENT

DEFINITIONS

RULES AND PROCEDURES

2007.1 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

2007.2 MEMBER APPLICATION AND SELECTION

2007.3 MEMBER DESELECTION

2007.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

2007.5 TRAINING

2007.6 UTILIZATION

2007.7 REFERRAL PROCEDURES

2007.8 ASSISTANCE TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES

ASSOCIATED DIRECTIVES

[Peer Support Member Application](#)

INTRODUCTION

The Peer Support Program is a personnel-oriented program for the Asheville Police Department designed to provide 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 roles both sworn and non-sworn, 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 Management Team: a team comprised of Peer Support team members, both sworn and civilian, of all ranks and levels, as approved by the Chief of Police. Positions include Team Commander (Lieutenant) and [two \(2\) Team Leaders \(sworn or non-sworn supervisors\)](#).

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

RULES AND PROCEDURES

2007.1 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- A. The Special Services Division Commander is responsible for the overall administration of the Peer Support Program, which includes but may not be limited to:
 - 1. Serving as the liaison between the Team 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.
- B. The Peer Support Team Commander is responsible for administrative duties such as but not limited to:
 - 1. Ensuring proper confidentiality protocol is 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 of all personnel of the availability of the program.
 - 5. Maintaining and publishing an accurate list of peer support team members.
 - 6. Answering questions regarding the peer support program.
- C. The Peer Support Management Team is directed by the Peer Support Team Commander. The Management Team is 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.

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 Management Team.
- D. Employees may apply for program membership by completing the Peer Support Member Application. A Supervisor Recommendation Form will need to 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 Special Services 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, which can only be revealed 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 revealed 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 presented a clear and immediate danger to self 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, which include 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 by misconduct, disciplinary problems, or other improper actions on the part of employees.
- 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 Management Team based on current best practices. The training for newly appointed peer support team members should be scheduled at the time of selection into the program or shortly thereafter.
- B. Newly selected Peer Support Team members will only participate in peer-to-peer support once 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 a minimum of 80% of scheduled team training sessions.
- D. It is highly encouraged that each Peer Support team member completes additional training recommended by the Peer Support Management Team 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 Management Team and communicated by the Special Services Division Commander to the Chief of Police or designee for approval.

2007.6 UTILIZATION

- A. The department will provide peer support for employees involved in a personal or professional crisis. Public safety employees are frequently impacted by various traumas and critical incidents to which they are exposed and may be impacted by personal stressors relating 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 be used to replace professional treatment programs, such as [Responder Support Services](#) or personal providers, but is available to augment such programs.

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 submitted to the Peer Support Team Commander by concerned peers, supervisors, or family members. The Peer Support Team Commander 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 that employees wishing to engage in [peer support](#) have a list of employees to contact.
- C. Debriefings for 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 will receive and approve the requests from outside agencies and make a notification to the team for 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:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Zack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "Z".

David Zack
Chief of Police