



Colorado Springs Police Department

General Order

702 Peer Support Program

Section 700 – Employee Well-Being

Effective Date: 4/8/2022

Supersedes Date: 2/28/2020

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to outline the expectations for the department's Peer Support Program (PSP).

.02 Cross-Reference

[GO 600 Complaints and Internal Investigations](#)

[DL-702-01 Peer Support Program Procedures](#)

[DL-702-10 Peer Support Program Responses to Critical Incidents](#)

[DL-702-11 Peer Support Program Responses to Traumatic Events](#)

[DL-702-20 Peer Support Program Wellness Debriefs](#)

.03 Discussion

Peer Support Programs (PSP) are proactive and effective extensions of traditional behavioral and mental health resources (e.g., professional/licensed counselors, etc.).

Peer supporters are employees, sworn and civilian, and volunteers of the department who have been vetted and specially trained to assist other department members by providing information, services, and if necessary, referrals to additional behavioral/mental health resources.

.04 Policy

Peer supporters will not provide professional services (e.g., offer diagnosis, prescribe treatment, counsel, etc.) or undertake any activity that constitutes the practice of psychotherapy under Colorado law.

A breach of the program's confidentiality expectations is considered a violation of policy and will be grounds for dismissal from the program.

All peer support contacts are voluntary for department members and as such, seeking out the resources available through the program will not be mandated.

Peer support is considered an ancillary responsibility to an employee's/volunteer's regular work assignments. As such, peer supporters will record any overtime incurred as *Hours Worked* in the department's scheduling software system, including the designated activity code. At the discretion of their supervisor, peer supporters may conduct peer support activities during their regular duty day.

.05 Definitions

Confidentiality: A professional, legal, or ethical duty that requires peer supporters to refrain from disclosing information from or about a recipient of services unless required by the law or policy and/or disclosed at the outset of the contact.

Department member: For the purpose of this policy, an employee, sworn or civilian, or volunteer of the department.

Dual role: Any function where a peer supporter fulfills a role aside from that of a representative of the program, including that of a supervisor/employee, family member, spouse, close friend, witness to an incident, or an investigator responsible for conducting a criminal/administrative investigation.

Employee: For the purpose of this policy, a sworn or civilian member of the department who is compensated by the department.

Peer supporter: A department member who has been vetted, selected and trained to assist other department members by providing support and information. Peer supporters are not counselors or therapists and will refer cases that are beyond their scope of training to the department's contracted mental health professional.

Privacy: The expectation that an individual's disclosure of personal information is confined to or intended only for the peer supporter who the information was disclosed.

Privilege: Legal protection from being compelled to disclose communications in certain protected relationships, as outlined in C.R.S. § 13-90-107 (1)(m)(1), *Who May Not Testify without Consent*.

.10 Service Model

Peer support contacts are voluntary and department members will not be required to seek out the services available through the program. In addition, the peer support program will not be used to perform administrative functions (e.g., fitness for duty evaluations, assisting with the relinquishment of firearms, etc.).

.12 Service Requests

Peer support services are available at the request of an employee, proactively by other department members, and/or in response to critical incidents or traumatic events.

Department Members

Department members who believe a peer support contact may be beneficial in processing information or identifying resources may choose to seek out peer support resources at any time. This can be accomplished by selecting a peer supporter from the peer support roster or by contacting a representative from the department's Wellness Unit.

Proactive Referral

In some situations, department members may come into contact with another department member who they believe may benefit from the resources available using the peer support program. In such a situation, a department member may make a referral to the peer support program by way of the Wellness Unit. The identity of the department member making such a referral will be kept confidential, as will any information about any resources the referred department member received from the program.

Critical Incidents and Traumatic Events

Peer support resources may be applied to any critical incident (as defined by policy) or a traumatic event (as defined by any department member). The proactive delivery of resources in such situations may include but is not limited to one-on-one communication or in a group setting (e.g., line-up, wellness debriefs, etc.).

.20 Program Structure

The Peer Support Program is a component of the department's overall wellness and resiliency program. The program falls under the responsibility of the Wellness Unit Sergeant, with direction and oversight being provided by the Wellness Section Lieutenant and the Professional Standards Division Commander. The assigned lieutenant and commander serve as official representatives of the chief of police and are designated as managers of the program.

The assignment of peer supporter is an ancillary responsibility to the department member's assigned responsibilities. Those department members interested in the position will be vetted, trained, and required to attend the program's training/monthly meetings.

The program operates under the clinical supervision of a licensed psychologist, who is under contract with the department.

.30 Privileged Communication

In accordance with C.R.S. § 13-90-107 (m), the communication between the peer supporter and the department member is privileged so long as it meets the following criteria and is not expressly prohibited by law or department policy (as outlined below):

- The department member is a member of a law enforcement agency
- The department member has been trained in peer support skills
- The department member has been officially designated by the Chief of Police as a member of the department's peer support program
- The communication occurred when the department member is acting in their official capacity as a peer supporter
- The department member is functioning within the program's policies and procedures

Absent the exceptions provided below, peer support members cannot be compelled by the department or its representatives to provide information about any individual who is receiving or has received PSP services.

.32 Confidentiality

To create a sense of trust with those department members who seek out PSP resources, peer supporters are expected to maintain a strict sense of confidentiality. As such, peer supporters are prohibited from sharing information about the services provided, including but possibly not limited to:

- Identifying any department member who seeks out or receives PSP resources
- Providing any information that could be used to identify a department member who has sought out or received PSP resources
- Confirming or denying that a department member has sought out or received PSP resources

Peer supporters will have a thorough understanding of the nature of privacy, confidentiality, and privilege and when information must be disclosed. This understanding starts with the peer supporter signing and acknowledging the confidentiality agreement upon completing the department's PSP training program. Peer supporters will ensure the department member receiving services is aware of and generally understands the limitations of confidentiality as it relates to the PSP.

The peer supporter will not keep written or recorded formal or private records of supportive contacts; other than non-identifying statistical records they are required to report on.

Peer supporters who violate the expectations for confidentiality will be removed from the program and may be subject to a disciplinary process, in accordance with department policy. Peer support personnel who become aware of a violation or possible violation of the confidentiality expectation will immediately report the information to Wellness Section supervisor.

.34 Exceptions to Confidentiality

Information learned by a department member acting in their official capacity as a peer supporter will not be shared with others, except in the following circumstances:

- With the consent of the department member receiving services
- A peer supporter was a witness or a party to the incident which prompted the delivery of peer support services
- There is an affirmative duty to report, as dictated by law and/or policy. This includes but may not be limited to:
 - Self-harm with the intent to carry out the act
 - Threats to others
 - Actual or suspected child abuse or neglect
 - Actual or suspected abuse or neglect of an at-risk person
 - Clear and immediate danger to themselves or others as a result of intoxication or abuse, drug or alcohol
 - There is reasonable cause to believe the person receiving peer support has a mental health disorder, and, as a result, is an imminent threat to themselves or is gravely disabled, as defined in C.R.S. § 27-65-102, *Behavioral Health*
 - Information indicative of any criminal conduct, including violations of law that mandate a report (e.g., domestic violence, use of force reporting, etc.)
 - Incidents of unreported serious *on-duty* misconduct (e.g., uses of force that does not appear to be objectively reasonable, departing from the truth, official misconduct, alcohol/substance intoxication, etc.)

In addition to these exceptions, department supervisors who serve as peer supporters are also required to report:

- Incidents of sexual and other harassment
- Discrimination
- Work-related injuries to an employee

At the onset of a peer support relationship and throughout the relationship (if necessary), peer supporters will inform the department members who seek out/receive services of the exceptions to confidentiality.

For those situations where a peer supporter questions whether a situation meets the reporting requirement, the peer supporter should contact a representative from the Wellness Unit. Without providing identifying information about the employee, representatives from the unit may elicit feedback of representatives from the department's Human Resources Manager and/or the department's clinical services provider.

.36 Procedures for Reporting Required Information

Non-Emergency

In non-emergency situations (e.g., reportable violations of law/department policy, etc.) and when it is safe to do so, the peer supporter should consult with the department member about the manner in which the information will be shared. For example, the person receiving services and the department may be better served by that person self-disclosing the information. The person receiving services may be assisted in their self-disclosure by the peer supporter or another behavioral health professional.

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations (e.g., threats to self/others, etc.), peer supporters will notify a Wellness Unit supervisor as soon as possible. This notification should occur as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Wellness Unit supervisor receiving such a notification may notify a competent authority to help address/mitigate the risks associated with the information (e.g., police, medical, etc.). In such a situation, the Wellness Unit supervisor should seek to incorporate the authority as discretely as possible, while still addressing the area of concern.

.38 Breach of Confidentiality

All cases requiring a breach of confidentiality require the peer supporter to notify the Wellness Unit Sergeant and the licensed psychologist providing clinical oversight, without delay.

.40 Ethical and Professional Behavior

Peer supporters are also expected to adhere to the highest level of ethical and professional standards, including but possibly not limited to:

- Acting with a sense of due regard for the rights and feelings of those who seek/receive PSP resources
- Avoiding actions that may adversely affect or reflect poorly on the program (e.g., lack of confidentiality, etc.)
- Maintaining a sense of awareness of their personal and technical limitations (e.g., personal bias, inexperience in a given area, etc.)
- Understanding and maintaining proper interpersonal boundaries (e.g., not engaging in a physical/romantic relationship with a department member who the peer supporter provides resources, etc.)

Peer supporters will seek immediate guidance from a Wellness Unit supervisor if they are unsure about the appropriateness or effectiveness of their own conduct or that of other program staff.

.42 Conflicts of Interest

Peer supporters must refrain from providing peer support services to department members if the relationship could reasonably be expected to impair a peer supporters' objectivity, competence, or effectiveness, or could otherwise harm the department member receiving services.

Examples of conflicts of interest include but are not limited to a peer supporter:

- Who has bias involving the subject matter being discussed (e.g., infidelity, political beliefs, etc.)
- Who has a difference of opinion that impairs their ability to provide services (e.g., differences in child-rearing, different religious beliefs, etc.)
- Engaging in financial/business dealings with a department member seeking/requesting service

When a peer supporter has a conflict of interest that prohibits them from being able to provide a department member with peer support services, the peer supporter will inform the department member of the conflict and seek to identify a suitable replacement peer supporter in a timely manner. After making arrangements, the peer supporter will recuse themselves from providing peer support resources to the department member.

.44 Dual Roles

While nothing in this policy prevents a peer supporter from being supportive of any department member, in the interest of objectivity, peer supporters will avoid providing peer support services to those department members whom they may have a dual role with.

In situations where a peer supporter and department member have a dual role, the peer supporter will communicate to the department member that they cannot engage in peer support communication with them and that the confidentiality provisions do not apply.

In the case of a dual role relationship, the peer supporter will inform the department member of the dual role and seek to identify a suitable replacement peer supporter in a timely manner. After making arrangements, the peer supporter will recuse themselves from providing peer support resources to the department member.

.46 Relationships Prohibited

Peer supporters are prohibited from engaging in romantic, sexual, or physical relationships with any department member to who they provide peer support services. Such prohibition will remain in place for at least six months after the peer supporters' last contact with the department member.

.50 Initial Peer Support Training

Those selected to participate in the PSP are required to attend and successfully complete peer support training prior to being considered peer supporters. The training will be provided by the department's contracted psychological services provider and will include information related to:

- Listening skills
- Stress management
- Trauma
- Recognizing symptoms of mental illnesses
- Anger management
- Substance-related disorders and addictions
- Family issues
- Suicide
- Grief and loss

.52 On-Going Training

Peer support personnel are required to attend/participate in ongoing training that will take place no less than once per quarter.

.54 Attendance at Training Required

Attendance at the ongoing training is mandatory unless excused by the Wellness Unit Sergeant. Peer supporters may have no more than one unexcused absence from a required training in each calendar year.

.60 Clinical Supervision

Peer supporters operate under the clinical supervision of a licensed psychologist. The licensed psychologist will ensure peer supporters receive group and individual clinical supervision as necessary to maintain an appropriate standard of care. In most situations, clinical discussions will take place at the program's monthly meetings.

.62 Clinical Discussions

While peer supporters are expected to attend/participate in the clinical discussions, those discussions will not include information that otherwise violates confidentiality expectations.

.70 Reporting Required

Peer supporters will report each of their peer support contacts using the department's approved reporting database. The setup of this database does not allow for peer supporters to enter information that could potentially violate confidentiality expectations, but it does track certain pieces of statistical information (e.g., the gender of the department member, employment status (sworn or civilian), the length of the contact, the general services provided). The statistical information gathered will be used to develop future training topics and needs.

Attachments

[Peer Support Team Confidentiality Agreement](#)