



General Order		Issued: 09/14/2021	GO 6.4.02
 McHenry County Sheriff's Office Robb Tadelman, Sheriff	ACA Standards:		
	Approved: 	Revised: 08/21/2024	
Chapter Title: SUPPORT SERVICES			Page 1 of 9
Subject: PEER SUPPORT TEAM			

I. PURPOSE

- A. The purpose of this general order is to establish policy and procedures for the McHenry County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Program.

II. POLICY

- A. The McHenry County Sheriff's Office is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all members, past and present, and their families. The Sheriff's Office recognizes that members may experience personal difficulties that may adversely affect their personal and professional lives. The Sheriff's Office supports and encourages members in seeking quality, confidential assistance. In keeping with this commitment, the Sheriff's Office has established the Peer Support Program staffed with trained McHenry County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team Members who provide confidential consultation and referrals.

The Peer Support Program is designed to offer assistance in the following areas: peer support during times of personal and/or professional stress, early intervention to help mitigate the impacts of stress, referral to program services, and education-based training.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Crisis*: An event or sequence of events affecting an individual's personal and/or professional life that culminates in behavior that poses a threat to the emotional, physical safety and/or well-being of that individual or to others. Crises include but are not limited to situations in which:
1. A Sheriff's Office member who is having severe physical/emotional difficulties and is in need of immediate attention, or
 2. A Sheriff's Office member who is experiencing difficulties with substance abuse or suicidal thoughts or threats and is in need of immediate attention, or
 3. A Sheriff's Office member who is no longer able or unfit to care for himself or herself.
- B. *Crisis Intervention*: Immediate on-the-spot assistance to individuals with acute difficulties that threaten their physical and/or emotional well-being. This service is directed toward immediate crises in contrast to receiving long-term treatment.

1. Crisis intervention has an important role in defusing and resolving immediate or emergency situations. Prevention is far more preferable as a means of resolving personal and problematic issues.
 2. Crisis situations require immediate action to ensure stability and require action based on the nature of the crisis.
 3. It must be determined whether the member is safe from harm, is a danger to themselves or others and/or has medical needs that must be addressed.
- C. *Mental Health Professional*: A licensed professional, departmentally authorized social or mental health caseworker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist. The Team needs to include a Mental Health Professional for clinical consultation.
- D. *Peer Support Program Coordinator*: Sheriff's Office Member who serves as a gatekeeper to ensure the integrity of the program for all employees and the Team by overseeing program services, training, and acting as a resource.
- E. *Peer Support Program Manager*: Sheriff's Office Member, usually a supervisor, who oversees logistics, policy, and duties for the Team. Can serve as a liaison between the Team and Sheriff's Office personnel if ever needed. Ideally, there is a Manager from the Operations Division and from the Corrections Division.
- F. *Peer Support Program Team Member*: A Sheriff's Office Member who is specially trained to provide peer-to-peer support.
- G. *Peer Support Team*: A group of appointed and trained Sheriff's Office Members that provide Peer Support and/or manage the Peer Support Team. These individuals include the Peer Support Program Coordinator, the Peer Support Program Manager(s) and the Peer Support Team Members.
- H. *Sheriff's Office Member/Peer*: Sworn and non-sworn personnel, or retired members of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office.

IV. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- A. The Program is designed to:
1. Provide emotional support to any employee who expresses a need for assistance during and after times of personal ~~of~~ or professional crisis.
 2. Promote trust, credibility, and integrity in all interactions.
 3. Allow for appropriate anonymity and to preserve confidentiality for persons utilizing Peer Support Team Members within the guidelines of this program.
 4. Develop Peer Support Team Members who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance or referral to professional/alternate resources as required.
 5. Support those who have had family tragedies.

6. Check on the status of those impacted by illnesses and injury as a result of official duties and to provide support where desired and needed.
- B. The Peer Support Team of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office is made up of trained Department members and requires voluntary involvement of Sheriff's Office members who are seeking support.
- C. All of the services offered by the Peer Support Team are available to all Sheriff's Office members.
- D. The services of the Peer Support Team are also available to spouses and families of Sheriff's Office members.
- E. Employees may seek support from any Member of the Peer Support Team.
- F. All services provided by the Peer Support Team are free of charge. Referrals to private therapists, specialists, outside agencies or hospitals are not covered under the services provided by the Team and may incur a fee.
- G. After receiving outside services, the member may set up a follow-up session with a Peer Support Team Member.
- H. If a member seeks professional counseling outside of the Peer Support Program, communication will be confidential as outlined in Chapter 740, Illinois Compiled Statutes, Section 110/3. Communication between a counseled member and a professional counselor are protected from discovery in federal cases under Federal Rule of Evidence 501.
- I. Members are not obligated to seek assistance through the Peer Support Program and may choose to use other support programs provided outside of the Sheriff's Office.
- J. It is not outside the scope of context for a supervisor and/or fellow peer to initiate or suggest an employee have contact with the Peer Support Team. For example, an employee can encourage a fellow coworker to seek assistance with a Peer Support Team Member. Or an employee can contact a Team Member or the Program Coordinator directly and ask for contact or a check-in to be made with a specific coworker. Contact can also be made by a Team Member directly to an employee without initiation from a supervisor or coworker. Finally, an employee can also encourage a superior to reach out to the Team.

V. PROCEDURES

A. SERVICES AVAILABLE

1. The Peer Support Program is established to provide confidential supportive assistance, including peer counseling, peer support and referral services for all Sheriff's Office members. Comprehensive services include, but are not limited to, referrals for crisis intervention services, substance abuse, gambling abuse, marriage and couples counseling, individual counseling, family-crisis

intervention, grief counseling, anger management and conflict-resolution counseling.

2. The services provided by the Peer Support Program are designed and tailored to meet the unique needs of every Sheriff's Office member seeking assistance. This is accomplished by maintaining a network of quality resources (i.e., treatment facilities, self-help and support groups) that allow the Team to respond efficiently to the needs of the individual.
 3. Organizational resources and support needed to assist peer employees:
 - a. Peer Support Team Members are authorized to use Department facilities to meet with employees.
 - b. Peer Support Team Members are permitted to consult with off-duty employees.
 4. Use of outside Peer Support Teams and services:
 - a. At the Sheriff's discretion, the Peer Support Team and/or Members may be assigned at times to assist outside departments with use of their services.
 - b. If the Peer seeking support does not feel comfortable receiving support from a fellow employee, they may reach out to another local department's Peer Support Team. The Program Coordinator can also help facilitate this.
 - c. If, during the support relationship, a Team Member feels the Peer requires additional services beyond the scope of the Team Member's abilities, the Team Member will then make the appropriate referral to outside providers and/or services. This does not apply if suicidal or homicidal thoughts or behaviors are suspected or present – Please see section V.C.4. of this policy for that protocol.
 5. Other Incidents:
 - a. Peer Support members are encouraged to reach out to and/or follow up with staff/personnel members involved in incidents which may have a strong emotional impact. Examples of such events include but are not limited to arrestee/inmate/detainee suicide attempt or death, staff/personnel member assault, witnessing violent or graphic crime scenes.
 - b. All communication and documentation shall be in accordance with this policy.
- B. DEPARTMENT REFERRALS TO THE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**
1. Sheriff's Office command and supervisory personnel have the authority and the responsibility to make members under their supervision aware of the Peer Support Program when appropriate.

2. Sheriff's Office members will be assured that any consultation with a representative of the Sheriff's Office Peer Support Program will be confidential.
3. In a crisis or non-life-threatening emergency, supervisors can recommend immediate intervention by the Peer Support Team by calling the Peer Support Team Coordinator or Manager(s), 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
4. If a supervisor is made aware of an off-duty crisis situation or evolving problem involving a supervisee or other employee (ex. victim of domestic disturbance call at personal residence, off-duty substance abuse, family conflict, signs of possible PTSD, etc.), it is highly recommended that the supervisor make a referral to the Peer Support Team for that employee.
5. Recommendations or referrals to the Peer Support Program will not be used as a substitute for the disciplinary process but should be an option for a supervisor if they identify the employee may benefit from consultation.
6. The procedures contained in this General Order do not relieve supervisors of their responsibility to counsel members as set forth by existing Sheriff's Office General Orders.

C. REQUESTING CONTACT FROM A PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER

1. One seeking assistance from the Peer Support Team for themselves, a peer, family member or any Sheriff's Office member can contact a Peer Support Team Member by:
 - a. Personal Contact – One can self-initiate and directly reach out to a Peer Support Team Member, Manager, or Coordinator.
 - b. SharePoint Referral – Link is located on right-hand side of the main Sheriff's SharePoint page.
 - c. Phone – One can contact the Coordinator or any Manger(s) to request services from a Team Member.
 - d. Drop Boxes – Located in Patrol by the mailboxes, in Dispatch and in Corrections by mailboxes.
 - 1) Drop boxes will be locked and each box will have a Team Member assigned to check it periodically, at minimum of once per week. That Team Member will be responsible for the key to their respective box. If that Team Member will be away for some time, they are in charge of finding replacement Team Member to temporarily check the box until their return.
 - e. One can request assistance from any supervisor or peer.
 - f. Any other means a Sheriff's Office employee sees effective.

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2. Confidentially remains a priority throughout the entire process, including referrals.
3. A current list, including photos, of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team are on SharePoint, located on the Peer Support site. Phone numbers for the Coordinator and Manager(s) are also at this location.
- 4. Life-threatening mental health emergencies, such as suicidal and/or homicidal threats or behaviors, should not be referred through these routes but, instead, the individual should be immediately taken to the nearest emergency room.**

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

1. The acceptance and success of the McHenry County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Program will be determined, in part, by the observance of confidentiality. One of the most important responsibilities for a Peer Support Team Member is the promotion of trust, anonymity and confidentiality for the Peer who seeks assistance through the Peer Support Program.
2. Each Team Member will advise the Peer that the relationship between the Team Member and the supported person is not an alternative to the operational Chain of Command, nor does it offer a way for an employee to avoid accountability for his or her actions.
3. The Team Member will maintain confidentiality and will not discuss any information developed in a peer support session, except what is required or exempted by law, and any criminal violations as required by Sheriff's Office policy and Rules and Regulations.
4. The exemptions to the confidentiality policy imposed on all Peer Support Team Members are:
 - a. Criminal Conduct Violations of Sheriff's Office Rules and Regulations, whether on or off duty. The McHenry County Sheriff's Office Rules and Regulations require members to report any information concerning any crime or any unlawful action to another member's supervisor or other available Chain of Command.
 - b. Mandatory Notifications by Law (As outlined in Chapter 5, Illinois Compiled Statutes, Section 840/20):
 - 1) Threats of Physical Harm: If, during the support relationship, a Peer threatens to harm another person, the Team Member is required by law and professional regulation to notify the person threatened and the local police department.
 - 2) Suicide: Any Team Member who reasonably believes that a Peer is seriously contemplating suicide is required by law to do everything

possible to prevent such an attempt, including making whatever notifications necessary to stop the attempted suicide.

1. If the situation and time allows, the Team Member should contact the Program's Mental Health Professional to consult on appropriate next steps. If this is not possible and threat of life is suspected, the individual should be immediately taken to the nearest emergency room.
 - 3) Child Abuse: If a Peer discloses participation in abusing a child, the Team Member must notify the appropriate agency of such abuse.
 - 4) Elder or Disabled Adult Abuse: If a Peer discloses participation in abusing a senior citizen (60 years of age or older), or a disabled adult (18-59 years of age), the Team Member must notify the appropriate agency of such abuse.
- c. If a Team Member is involved as a participant or witness to any of the actions listed above, the Team Member must report the actions and may not participate in a confidential (privacy-protected) support relationship with the Peer whose actions were shared or witnessed.
- d. If, at any time, a Peer demonstrates or describes suicidal or homicidal thoughts and/or behaviors while speaking to a Team Member, the Team Member will coordinate getting that Peer to the nearest emergency room for immediate psychological evaluation. If the Peer is not in immediate danger, but the Team Member is still concerned and unsure if an emergency evaluation is the appropriate response, the Team Member is encouraged to contact the Program's Mental Health Professional for consultation.
5. Client Privilege is a legal issue. Unlike certain licensed professionals, who are granted client privilege under state statute, Team Members do not have the right to claim client privilege in a court of law. Situations such as police shootings, excessive force, or civil lawsuits present requirements for the Team Member to advise the person that the contents of their conversations could be subject to subpoena.
 6. The Peer Support Team will never document Peer's identities that utilize the program. The only information that may be kept is number of hours per month Team Members spend providing peer support.
- E. PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBER SELECTION PROCESS & TRAINING
1. Peer Support Team Members are pre-screened through an interview process and obtain the following characteristics, to include but not limited to:
 - a. Confidential
 - b. Good Listening Skills
 - c. Compassionate
 - d. Approachable
 - e. Engaging

- f. Sound Moral Judgement
 - g. Desire to Help Others
2. The Peer Support Team is thoughtfully comprised of Members with diverse backgrounds and roles, in order to best meet the needs of MCSO employees.
 3. Prior to being accepted onto the Team, Members must agree to hold confidentiality at the highest standard to protect the integrity of the Team and the Program.
 4. In addition to initial training provided for Peer Support Team Members, continued training may be provided to supplement and develop skills of the Team Members. Training may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Confidentiality
 - b. Limits and Liability
 - c. Ethical Issues
 - d. Role Conflict
 - e. Non-Verbal Communication
 - f. Stress Management
 - g. Grief Management
 - h. Cross-Cultural Issues
 - i. Problem-Solving Skills
 - j. Suicide Awareness and Prevention
 - k. Alcohol and Substance Abuse
 - l. Domestic Violence
 - m. Trauma Intervention
 - n. Referral Programs and Mental Health Consultations
 5. The Peer Support Team Coordinator and Program Manager(s) will assess and recommend continued training based on the needs of the Program and the Team Members.
 6. The Peer Support Team will continue to expand and grow in Members and/or training to continue to meet the needs of the Sheriff's Office.

F. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PEER SUPPORT TEAM

1. Peer Support Team Coordinator:
 - a. Serves as the primary point of contact internally and externally for the Program.
 - b. Oversees services provided, training, overall Team function and selection of the Team Members.
 - c. Maintains the integrity, scope, and mission of the Program.
 - d. Ensures the Team is providing services in accordance with state laws.
 - e. Monitors Team development to meet the Sheriff's Office needs.

2. Peer Support Team Manager(s):
 - a. Supports the Program Coordinator in their role and assists in their absence.
 - b. Serves as a support, communication avenue and liaison between Team Members and Sheriff's Office personnel.
 - c. Aids in development of training and scheduling.
 - d. Ensures the Team Coordinator has the support, abilities, resources, and personnel needed to manage the Program.
3. Peer Support Team Member:
 - a. Serves as the primary administrator of peer-to-peer support.
 - b. Aids in Program training and development.
 - c. Advocates for and promotes the Peer Support Team Program.
 - d. Provides additional duties and activities needed by the Team Coordinator and/or Manager(s).

G. ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR ALL PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS

1. Team Members will not practice, condone, facilitate or collaborate in any form of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, sex orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or state.
2. Team Members will maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct and shall not be part of any type of behavior, activity or policy that denies any Peer equal, non-discriminatory access to service and/or support; or which deliberately demeans the rights and/or dignity of any Peer.
3. Team Members will at all times respect the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality rights of all Peers they serve.
4. Team Members shall avoid being drawn into dual relationships while the support relationship is ongoing.
5. Team Members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and take the necessary steps to ensure their conduct does not negatively impact the perception of the Program.
6. If at any time a Team Member violates the above ethical conduct, the Coordinator, Program Managers, and/or Sheriff's Office administration hold the right to remove the Team Member from the Peer Support Team.