

GENERAL ORDER

G.O. 1-019

SUBJECT: CRITICAL INCIDENT AND PEER SUPPORT



DATE EFFECTIVE : January 18, 2021
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A.S.
ADMIN: Signature On Issue
SIGNATURE:
INDEX: REFERRAL PROCESS, PST ROLE, CONFIDENTIALITY, FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER, TRAINING

I. Purpose and Responsibility:

- A. Purpose: To ensure the members of the Monroe Police Department have access to behavioral health resources and to note the methods to access those resources.
- B. Responsibility:
 - 1. It will be the responsibility of the Monroe Police Department to provide access to its members for:
 - a. Help/support post traumatic event.
 - b. Treatment and support due to substance abuse or over use.

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- c. Help/support relative to marriage and family issues.
 - d. Help/support to address special consideration of citizen soldier's/military families.
 - e. Help/support relative to suicidal ideation (regardless of causation).
 - f. Programs/resources/support regarding the creation and sustainment of a resilient workforce.
- 2. It will be the responsibility of supervisory, investigative and other sworn and non-sworn employees to be familiar with and follow the provisions established by this general order.
 - 3. It will be the responsibility of all personnel to be familiar with the provisions of this department's Employee Assistance Program.
 - 4. It will be the responsibility of the Monroe Police Department to facilitate contact and affected officers to make themselves available to meet with the department's designated Employee Assistance Provider within 24 hours of a Qualifying Event.

II. Discussion:

A. Law enforcement personnel face trauma throughout their careers, often not seeking treatment due to the stigma that seeking help shows weakness. The Monroe Police Department recognizes its greatest and most valuable assets are the officers and employees that make up its ranks. In order for members of this Department to best serve the community, they must be medically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually ready to answer the calls for service. This general order establishes procedures to ensure that members in crisis have access to mental health resources at any time. Members should access these resources freely with the knowledge and understanding that it will occur in a supportive environment absent of judgement or retribution.

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III. Definitions:

- A. PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- B. Qualifying Event: An event occurring in the line of duty on or after July 1st, 2019 in which a police officer:
 - 1. Views a deceased minor;
 - 2. Witnesses the injury to a person who subsequently dies before or upon admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as a result of any other intervening cause;
 - 3. Has physical contact with and treats an injured person who subsequently dies before or upon admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as the result of any other intervening cause;
 - 4. Carries an injured person who subsequently dies before or upon admission at a hospital as a result of the injury and not as the result of any other intervening cause;
 - 5. Witnesses a traumatic physical injury that results in the loss of a vital body part or a vital body function that results in permanent disfigurement of the victim.
- C. Qualified Individuals: Any person who is employed as a police officer.
- D. Affected Person: Any department employee who is not a police officer.
- E. Employee Assistance Program (EAP): An employee benefit program offering confidential workplace mental health referrals at the expense of the employer.
- F. Peer Support Team (PST) – Volunteer program that functions as a support and debriefing resource for employees and their families. The PST provides

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support to personnel experiencing personal and work related stress. It also provides support during and following critical or traumatic incidents resulting from performance of duty.

- G. Peer Support Coordinator- Monroe Police Supervisor assigned to oversee the Peer Support function.
- H. Peer Support Team Members - Volunteer personnel selected from various divisions within the department serving as peer helpers throughout the Department. Their function is to act as listeners and/or facilitators between employees who request and/or require assistance and the professional providers of such assistance. Members of the PST are not therapists.

IV. Policy:

- A. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department to maintain an EAP for all employees.
- B. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department that the services will be provided upon request, and will be conducted on a strict confidential basis. The employee should contact the town's Human Resources Director at the Monroe Town Hall or Behavioral Health Consultants LLC directly at (203) 407-1029 or 1 800 864-2742. Behavioral Health Consultants LLC is the Town of Monroe Employee Assistance Provider. Behavioral Health Consultants LLC can be located on the internet at www.bhcservices.com
- C. It will be the policy of the Monroe Police Department to maintain a Volunteer PST Program. PST volunteers shall report to the site of critical incidents when requested by on scene supervisors or administration.

V. PROCEDURES:

- A. The Monroe Police Department considers the PST and EAP to be part of overall employee health.

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- B. PST members may be contacted at any time by any member of the Department should they need confidential assistance.
- C. The EAP function offers access to trained and experienced counselors who are skilled in helping people deal more effectively with various problems. Counselors may also make referrals to other professionals or community services as needed.
- D. The EAP services are free to eligible employees, spouses and dependents. There is a set number of free EAP sessions per year per issue for each employee and his or her family unit. Problems that require more intensive treatment will be referred by EAP to other services (either medical insurance and or community resources) for appropriate diagnosis, treatment and follow up.
- E. The EAP can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to ensure prompt response to any employee situation.
- F. Participation in the PST or EAP will remain confidential unless the employee provides written consent to release information, the situation is deemed life threatening by an EAP counselor, or law requires that the information be reported.
- G. Referral Process:
 - 1. Supervisory Referrals - The basis for referral to the program by a supervisor may be:
 - a. The apparent presence of personal, emotional, psychological or related medical problem affecting job performance.
 - b. A request from an employee for advice or assistance regarding a personal, emotional, psychological or related medical problem.
 - 2. Self Referrals- Personnel are encouraged to seek help, either directly through EAP or through the PST member(s) before problems interfere with their overall mental health, physical health, personal life or their job performance.

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H. PST Role In EAP Services:

1. The PST is not a replacement for the town contracted EAP services. PST members are not clinicians or therapists. They are readily accessible resources for the Monroe Police Department personnel in need of assistance. The PST and the department EAP contractor are both resources for personnel and the two programs shall interact in the following manner:
 - a. The Peer Support Team is not part of the disciplinary process.
 - b. Peer Support team members may encourage an employee in need of clinical assistance to contact EAP.
 - c. A Peer Support team member may contact EAP for a referral for the employee with the employee's consent.
 - d. EAP clinicians shall be available to the Peer Support Team for consultation on a 24/7 basis.

I. Confidentiality:

1. Confidentiality is essential to promoting trust and anonymity between Peer Support Team members and individuals requesting assistance. Confidentiality is critical to protect the identity of sworn employees and content of their contact with a PST member. Peer Support members are not licensed counselors or therapists, but act as peer support, providing/offering information and the opportunity to obtain information and direction to resolve concerns in a confidential setting.
 - a. The interaction between a PST member is a relationship that is considered confidential by the Department in order to ensure trust, anonymity, and effectiveness of any assistance requested. While reasonable effort to protect anonymity shall be taken by the team member, there are confidentiality exceptions to the department confidentiality policy.

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- b. No PST member will be required to release the contents of his/her conversations with any employee in the program to any superior ordering the disclosure of the information, unless the exceptions are met as outlined in the following sections. The Department also agrees that in order for this program to be successful, a peer support member, in his/her capacity as a PST member, will not be classified as a “subject” and/or “witness” during any internal affairs investigations and will not be ordered to disclose any information gained in his/her role as a team member.
- c. In order for the peer support program to be effective and successful, employees must believe what they share about themselves will remain private. In other words, employees must believe their statements are confidential, but not privileged. Therefore, all Peer Contacts are responsible to “keep the privacy” of their fellow employees by not discussing the statements or other material in any way that could be used to identify a specific employee. They must only speak for themselves and not for others in the Department. No PST members will discuss private conversations or confidential information with other PST members, other than the team coordinator.
- d. No PST member will take or maintain written notes of any conversations or to record any conversations.

2. Confidentiality Exceptions:

- a. The rights and privacy of employees will be safeguarded to the maximum extent possible, while balanced with the Department’s compelling interest in maintaining a safe and productive workplace and work force. At the onset of each Peer Contact, the individual must be told that there are some situations where confidentiality cannot be absolute. While every effort will be made to protect anonymity, the gravity of some situations will demand attention by the administration.

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Peer Contacts will be told that confidentiality will be maintained except in the following circumstances:

1. When the circumstances indicate those being assisted are a danger or threat to themselves or others.
2. When child/elder abuse is suspected, alleged, or apparent.
3. When there are indications of domestic violence.
4. When there is a disclosure of a serious crime.
5. Under other mandated reporter situations.

3. Breach of Confidentiality:

- a. Non-emergency situations: Whenever a PST member believes a confidentiality exception is present, the PST member will, as soon as possible, contact the PST Coordinator and discuss the general circumstances of the situation without utilizing names of the affected employee. If in the judgment of the team coordinator, immediate attention is required, the PST member will disclose all relevant information about the situation including the identity of the employee or individual(s) involved. Pursuant to his/her legal obligations, the PST Coordinator will immediately notify his/her immediate supervisor.
- b. Emergency Situations: Whenever a PST member becomes aware of a critical issue involving imminent risk of physical harm to the client employee or others, that PST member will make appropriate notifications to the PST Coordinator and the shift Commanding Officer. PST members must recognize that in any situation described under the confidentiality exceptions section of this General Order, confidentiality will not be required of the PST members.

J. Not Considered Discipline:

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1. The PST Program will not be utilized by the Department as method to deter misconduct, encourage compliance with Department rules, or to impose discipline. Additionally, supervisors shall not require a PST member to violate the provisions of this policy.
2. If at any time during an Internal Affairs investigation an issue concerning the scope of the IA inquiry involves matters that may impact disclosure of confidential personal information, the Administration will meet and confer with the PST Coordinator and the officer. Union representation will be offered to the officer.

K. Family Liaison Officer:

1. The PST will also function as Family Liaison Officers designated to assist family members of the department should the need arise.
2. A PST member will meet with each new recruit / probationary Police Officer on the date of their "Family Night" at their respective Police Academy.
3. PST Materials and services will be provided to the family of the recruit / probationary Police Officer.
4. New recruits / probationary Police Officers will be provided with the Monroe Police Department Critical Incident / Line of Duty Death Information Packet to be completed and returned to any member of the Peer Support Team.
5. One day per month, a PST will reach out and or follow up with Officers who are on light duty or have suffered an unusual event recently and offer any assistance where needed.

L. Training:

Ongoing training will be provided to the PST members when it becomes available. Peer Support Team members will be required to meet quarterly to review the program and

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update their communication skills and to ensure that the purpose of the program is being met. Team members will also keep up to date with related training as the topic of mental health is ever evolving.