



PEER SUPPORT TEAM/ CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Contents:

- I. Policy
- II. Definitions
- III. Confidentiality and Responsibility
- IV. ***Department*** Responsibilities
- V. Coordinator Responsibilities
- VI. Team Member Responsibilities
- VII. Training
- VIII. Team Selection
- IX. Team Notification Procedures for Critical Incidents
- X. ***Procedures for Contacting Peer Support***
- XI. ***Follow-Up Service***
- XII. Proponent Unit:
- XIII. Cancellation

I. POLICY

The Peer Support Team is designed to be a confidential consultation and resource for members of the department and is not to be used as an investigative tool. The ***Peer Support*** Team will consist of trained sworn personnel able to support members of the department by providing assistance in the areas of personal and group debriefing, anonymous and confidential peer support, and resilience training. This policy is not to interfere in any way with the voluntary use of/or referral to any other related programs or services.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Critical Incident

Any situation faced by members of the department that cause them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions and which has the potential to interfere with the ability to function either at a scene or at a later time.

B. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

A formal Critical Incident Stress Management Debriefing (CISD) is a group discussion of a traumatic experience. These confidential meetings typically occur within a reasonable time of the incident. Although a CISD is usually held within three days, the specific timing depends on a number of factors. ***Peer Support*** Team members must judge the timing of the CISD meeting on a case by case basis.

C. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

A comprehensive, systematic, and multi-component approach to managing traumatic stress within an organization.

D. *Peer Support Team*

A group of trained departmental members consisting of a coordinator, peer support providers, and a mental health professional able to sustain sanctioned Critical Incident Stress Debriefings, One to One Support, and Resiliency services to the agency members.

E. Follow-Up Services

Contact with members following initial services provided by a ***Peer Support*** Team member.

F. Individual Support

One-on-One support available to members with any Peer Support Provider, about any topic that is of concern to the member. Department members may approach any Peer Support Provider at any time.

G. Peer Support Providers

Members of the agency who are trained through an approved *Peer Support*/CISM course. These members should be able to identify the normal stress reactions associated with critical incidents.

H. Mental Health Professional

A *Peer Support*/CISM trained member of the *Mobile Crisis Team* (See Index Code 1611).

I. Referral

Recommendations made by members of the *Peer Support* Team to department members suggesting contact with the EAP, chaplains, or other mental health providers.

J. Team Coordinator

Peer Support team member assigned with primary oversight and administrative functions of the *Peer Support* Team.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

A. Members of the department who choose to use *Peer Support* Team services must be made aware that no special legal privilege is extended to peer support providers such as in the case of doctors/patients and attorneys/clients.

B. The department and team members agree to actively protect confidentiality in order to sustain program viability.

C. Peer support providers shall ensure that department members understand all conversations and sessions are strictly confidential with the exception of:

1. Information indicating imminent harm to the member or others.
2. Information that may prevent serious crimes.
3. Situations requiring mandated reporting by law (ie. child abuse, domestic violence, etc.)
4. Information shared between peer support providers enabling other team members to garner assistance and experience from one another. These discussions shall be general in nature, shall not include names or other unnecessary identifiers, and shall not be discussed outside of closed team sessions.

D. *All Peer Support Team members will sign a confidentiality agreement. A failure to maintain confidentiality, except as identified in section III-C, will result in a Peer Support Team member being removed from Peer Support and possibly being disciplined or terminated.*

IV. DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The Police Department considers communications between a department member and peer counselor as privileged and shall not question a peer support provider concerning the identity or services provided to a member of the department.

B. The Police Department will ensure department members attend sessions for all mandatory CISM/*Peer Support* activations.

C. The Police Department will support scheduling and logistics requirements of the team and its members regarding training and duties.

V. COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Shall ensure *Peer Support* Team members comply with policy and procedures set forth in this policy.

B. Shall monitor *Peer Support* Team members to ensure they meet the requirements of their regular duties and remain eligible for team participation.

- C. Shall monitor **Peer Support** Team member's performance to ensure they meet standards of training, performance, and behavior.
- D. Shall provide assistance to **Peer Support** Team members reporting confidentiality exceptions previously described.
- E. Shall be ultimately responsible for the administration and logistical need of the team to include maintaining the team roster schedule, timely notification of scheduled meetings and trainings, and providing general administrative and oversight functions.
- F. Shall submit an annual report to the Chief of Police by February 1st of each year consisting of the number of team members, number of critical incident call-outs, number of peer support contacts, number of wellness trainings provided by the team, total number of hours expended, and any monetary expenditures to include overtime, training or equipment.

VI. TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Shall not interfere in any on-going criminal or internal investigation and avoid direct involvement in the incident. Regardless of rank, the Peer Support Provider exercises no command authority when performing team duties.
- B. Shall notify the coordinator immediately of issues that may impair or affect his/her ability to operate as a peer support provider.
- C. Shall recognize they are not mental health providers and operate within the limits of their training. They shall encourage members to seek professional assistance when appropriate.
- D. Shall not take notes or otherwise document the session.
- E. Shall immediately notify the coordinator and affected party's command of emergent or criminal issues as described previously in this policy.

VII. TRAINING

- A. All training shall be provided by recognized professional organizations and individuals working in the **Peer Support /CISM** field.
- B. Initial training shall consist of a basic course conducted by recognized **Peer Support /CISM** instructors.
- C. Team meetings and trainings shall be conducted on a quarterly basis.

VIII. TEAM SELECTION

- A. *All interested employees who choose to volunteer as a Peer Support Team member must submit their request through their chain-of-command to the Peer Support Team Coordinator.*
- B. *Prospective Peer Support Team members must be willing to meet the following criteria:*
 - 1. *Be willing to respond as often as needed within the course of normal duties.*
 - 2. *Agree to maintain confidentiality within the course of normal duties.*
 - 2. *Be empathetic and possess interpersonal and communication skills.*
 - 3. *Must successfully complete the selection process.*
 - 4. *Must attend and successfully complete an approved Peer Support/CISM training course.*
 - 5. *Must participate in on-going training.*

IX. TEAM NOTIFICATIONS PROCEDURES FOR CRITICAL INCIDENTS

- A. The Team Coordinator shall be responsible for maintaining and updating current contact rosters.

B. Initial notification shall be made by a Police Lieutenant or above. *Notifications will be made by using the dedicated Peer Support on-call number (410-222-3475)*

C. Notification and CISM Team response shall be mandatory for:

1. Use of deadly force that results in death or serious injury (see Index Code 401).
2. Line of duty death
3. Serious injury to department members in the performance of their duties.

D. A Police Lieutenant or above may also request a *Peer Support* Team response for any incident that produces a high level of stress.

E. *A minimum of two (2) Peer Support Team members will respond to any critical incident activation.*

X. PROCEDURES FOR CONTACTING PEER SUPPORT

A. *The Peer Support Team can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Any Anne Arundel County Police Department employee, retired or current, and/or any family member of a retired or current employee, can contact a Peer Support member directly or via the Peer Support dedicated phone number (410-222-3475).*

B. *The Communications Section cannot make notifications directly to the Peer Support Team due to confidentiality purposes.*

XI. FOLLOW UP SERVICE

A. Shall be provided in accordance with guidelines and may include mental health or other professionals deemed appropriate or requested by *Peer Support* providers and affected members.

B. Peer Support is not part of any formal Employee Assistance Program (EAP) referral or any administrative action taken by the department. While peer support may be requested in conjunction with the EAP, it is not a replacement.

XII. PROPONENT UNIT: Bureau of Patrol.

XIII. CANCELLATION: This directive cancels Index Code 1611.2, dated 08-28-14.