

The Department makes available to all Department employees a Peer Support Group Counseling Program. In addition, the City makes available to all employees an Employee Assistance (Where to Turn) Program. Both programs are designed to assist in the identification and resolution of concerns or problems, either personal or job-related, which may adversely affect an employee's personal or professional well-being or job performance.

❖ **Confidential and Professional Assessment, Counseling, and Referral Service**

To assist employees and their family members in identifying and solving problems that may be affecting their quality of life or job performance. All employees and their immediate family members are eligible to use either program.

Information on the Peer Support Group Counseling Program is available to Department employees in the form of a booklet referred to elsewhere in this Chapter.

Information on the Where to Turn program is available through the City's Human Resources Department

All services are strictly confidential and are protected in accordance with state law. No one will ever be told of the employee's visit or what was discussed without his or her written consent. Both programs offer appropriate and timely problem assessment services for employees.

Employee participation in either program is voluntary. A supervisor may suggest or encourage an employee to use either program; however, the option of participation remains that of the employee. Additionally, if an employee begins counseling, they can discontinue participation at any time. It should be noted that all referrals made by a supervisor to an employee are suggestive in nature and it is up to the employee to initiate contact and use the services available.

A valuable part of this program is helping the employee to identify resources that may be able to assist them in problem resolution. Referrals may be suggested to the employee to workplace or community resources for appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and/or follow-up.

Peer support group counseling is also not part of any fitness for duty evaluation. However, a counselor may also concurrently be assisting an individual who happens to be undergoing an evaluation by a mental health professional so designated by the employer.

It is incumbent upon all supervisors to be aware of the existence of both programs and the services they provide. All newly appointed supervisors will be provided information through training. Supervisors are encouraged to be aware of behavioral changes and changes in work habits exhibited by employees that may signal problems in their lives that may affect work performance. Possible changes include but are not limited to an increase in use of sick time, increased numbers of citizen-generated complaints against the employee, a decrease in work productivity, excessive alcohol use, drug abuse, added stresses in personal life, etc.

Employees having knowledge of a co-worker, who could benefit from the services, are encouraged to discuss the issue with the affected employee or obtain an informational brochure from the Human Resources Department so a referral can be made that will assist the employee. Employees who are concerned over perceived changes in another employee's situation may also make contact with the Human Resources Department or the Peer Support Program Director to discuss the issue anonymously to seek guidance and without identifying the employee.

❖ **Peer Support Group Counseling Program**

The Peer Support Group Counseling Program is a service for Bellevue Police Department employees and their families. It provides confidential assistance in the identification and resolution of personal or professional concerns or problems that may adversely affect an employee's personal or professional well-

being or job performance. These concerns may include, but are not limited to, issues of mental health, marital or other relationship issues, family, financial, alcohol and substance abuse, death and illness (grief), occupational issues, emotional stress and critical incident stress, or other personal matters. If a problem is too serious to be resolved within the program, referral will be made to the Program's consulting mental health professional and/or to another outside professional agency, counselor, or therapist having specific expertise working with the law enforcement community.

Peer support group counselors are also an integral part of the Department's response to critical incidents (refer to [Critical Incidents policy](#)).

This program is in addition to, and often able to provide more on-going and longer-term assistance than the employer-provided Employee Assistance Program (EAP) operated through a commercial mental health referral service. However, use of either of these programs is the individual employee's personal choice.

Similar to the EAP concept, the goal of this type of program is also to help individuals who have developed problems by providing services for consultation, treatment and rehabilitation in order to prevent their condition from progressing to a degree that it will prevent the employee from functioning effectively in the workplace.

By having a select number of specifically trained peer support group counselors, the Department offers the potential of effectively providing support to employees under stress. With careful planning and implementation, the Department can provide a viable support network at an extremely low cost monetarily, while receiving a high return in employee welfare and morale.

❖ **Operation and Referral** (CALEA 22.2.6)

The intent of the Peer Support Program is to provide 24-hour availability of peer support group counselors. Lists of current designated peer support group counselors will be posted throughout the Department for use by employees desiring assistance, as well as be maintained by Personnel Services and NORCOM staff for call-out purposes.

In most cases, assistance will be rendered in a timely manner (often immediate), taking the form of on-duty meetings of relatively short duration. Peer support group counselor's service is voluntary and no compensation shall be authorized where activities extend beyond normal working hours. On-duty assistance must generally be conducted so that the Department's service to the community is not adversely affected.

Use of Department resources, including Department facilities and vehicles, is authorized as necessary. Peer support group counseling may be done wherever the person seeking assistance and the peer support group counselor feel they have adequate privacy.

Peer support group counselors may also be utilized in any critical incident stress debriefing process (as per Critical Incidents policy).

Communications made to a peer support group counselor by an officer receiving counseling as a result of an incident in which the officer was involved in his or her official capacity are considered to be privileged communications under RCW 5.60.060(6)(a). For the privilege to apply, counselors must be designated by the Chief of Police prior to the incident that gives rise to the counseling.

Exceptions to confidentiality are when a person is a threat to him- or herself, or to others (to include child abuse).

Unless an exception listed above is applicable, no individual, group, organization, Department, city employee or official shall have access to any information regarding an individual's participation in the Program.

No member of the Program staff is to discuss any fact or aspect of an individual's participation unless specifically authorized by the participant or as required by law (as in the above exceptions).

The Peer Support Group Counseling Program staff consists of:

❖ Program Consultant

The Consultant is a qualified mental health professional, defined as a Department-designated psychologist (PhD, PsyD level), or psychiatrist (M.D. level) or other mental health professional (Master's Degree level), having experience working with law enforcement personnel and their families to recognize and cope with the natural responses to a critical incident. The function of the Consultant is to provide training to peer support group counselors and act as a professional consultant for the Program. This person may also act as the Program Director, where qualified.

❖ Program Director

The Program Director is a Department employee assigned by Personnel Services. The Director's duties are administrative, such as arranging peer support group counselor training and maintaining a current registry of peer support group counselors. This person may also act as the Program Consultant, where qualified.

❖ Chaplain

The Police Department Chaplain also serves under this Program, providing an additional support resource for law enforcement personnel and their families. The chaplain may serve as Program Director, where qualified. The Chaplain may provide all the functions of a local church minister.

❖ Peer Support Group Counselors

Peer support group counselors are Department employees who volunteer for the Program based primarily on their interest in helping fellow employees cope with personal or professional problems. Besides experience, all peer support group counselors additionally maintain a certain level of proficiency through their attendance at initial and later on-going in-service training.

Peer support group counselors are not psychological counselors. They are trained to be sympathetic, active listeners and to share the thoughts and feelings they have acquired through experience and training.

Program procedures, personnel selection, and training requirements are further detailed in the Peer Support Group Counseling Program manual.

❖ **Volunteer Department Chaplain**

The Police Department Chaplain serves department employees, their family members, and members of the community. In this role, the Chaplain shall be a resource for mental, emotional, and spiritual support.

The Chaplain shall work in conjunction with the Department's Peer Support Group Counselor Program and Employee Assistance Program, offering another alternative for those seeking help and support.

For the employee or his or her family members, the Chaplain exists for those times when an empathetic ear is needed outside the normal structure of the agency and yet one close enough to understand the unique issues of a career in law enforcement.

For community members, the Chaplain fills a gap when called upon by the Department for those who need help but may be hesitant to seek it or who do not know how to do so.

On call 24 hours a day, the Chaplain will provide comfort, care, and compassion during high-stress situations, serving as a bridge to other care givers in the community and liaison between community members and the department.

The Chaplain is not a commissioned officer but is considered a member of the Department and is a credentialed minister. His or her acceptability as a chaplain is contingent upon his or her continued good standing within the religious organization having bestowed the credential. The withdrawal of its endorsement of the Chaplain brings his or her immediate separation from duty with the Department.

Communication with the Chaplain is considered confidential under state law.

The Chaplain shall be identifiable by Police Department Chaplain ID card and/or badge, Police Chaplain Jacket and/or uniform, Chaplain Cap, or combination of any of the above and in a manner becoming the ministry.

The Chaplain can be called upon to perform for Department members and their families all the functions of a local church minister, such as (but not limited to):

- ❖ Performing weddings, baptisms and dedications
- ❖ Calling upon the sick and injured
- ❖ Performing funerals and memorial services, and officiating at other religious and civil ceremonies
- ❖ Participating in graduations, promotions, award ceremonies, and other Department social events
- ❖ Providing personal support, counseling, and encouragement
- ❖ Providing (if trained) critical incident stress management, including participating as an active member of the peer support team after critical incidents
- ❖ Providing assistance and follow-up for critical incidents both for the personnel involved as well as for victims of traumatic events
- ❖ Providing training or making presentations in Department's training programs on subjects such as personnel and family orientations, stress, family crisis intervention, working with the traumatized, making death or other notifications
- ❖ Providing assistance in making death or other notifications, and providing grief support for victims, witnesses, surviving family members, and other involved persons
- ❖ Upon request of family or Investigations personnel, responding to a child death incident
- ❖ Being on call to respond and assist on-scene with victim's needs, freeing officers to be able to concentrate on their law enforcement responsibilities
- ❖ Serving as a bridge for victims to other caregivers in the community
- ❖ Providing advice on religious, moral and ethical matters

Additionally, the Chaplain shall:

- ❖ Keep in touch with the pressures and problems that confront Department members, coordinate visits to all sections of the department during various watches, attend shift briefings, and participate in a ride-a-long at least once a month

- ❖ Not in any way interfere with a Department member in the performance of duty
- ❖ Submit a monthly report through the Peer Support Group Counseling Program Director detailing his/her activity during the previous month (containing *no* identifying or confidential information)
- ❖ Be trained in and subject to all Department policies and procedures
- ❖ Not air grievances in public, but will follow appropriate Department grievance policies and procedures
- ❖ Be subject to review by the Department through established policies and procedures
- ❖ Adhere to the Code of Ethics subscribed to by the International Conference on Police Chaplains
- ❖ Refer all public release of information requests to the Department PIO

Call-out procedures

Officers in the field may call the Chaplain for any of the following situations:

- ❖ Death or serious injury notifications
- ❖ Crisis intervention/grief support due to death or serious injury of a family member in the home, including suicide, homicide, accidental, and death due to illness
- ❖ Any traumatic event involving small children (i.e., SIDS)
- ❖ Major disaster, residential fire, motor vehicle accident
- ❖ Any other event or situation deemed necessary by an officer (and coordinated with an on-scene supervisor)

In essence, the Chaplain can be called upon to respond on-scene to remove some of the strain on the victim, victim's family, and on employees affected.

The Chaplain shall:

- ❖ Keep his/her pager on at all times
- ❖ Check the pager on a regular basis to make sure it is on and that batteries are strong
- ❖ Respond ASAP to any page received, even if unable to take the call
- ❖ Shall be eligible for mileage reimbursement at the City's current rate and reimbursement for costs associated with incidents as authorized by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

To access the Chaplain for an on-duty incident, the Department member shall contact NORCOM, which will page the Chaplain. When the Chaplain calls in, NORCOM shall relay the nature of the call, the address to which a response is needed, and the name of the Department member he/she is to report to on-scene.

Employees may contact the Chaplain directly for personal matters.

The Chaplain shall advise NORCOM approximately how long it should take to arrive on-scene. NORCOM will then relay this information to the requesting member. The Chaplain, upon

arriving at the scene, will then report to that person or to anyone else so designated. The Chaplain will wear Department ID on an outer garment and/or wear the chaplain's jacket.

On-scene Department members shall have the discretion as to how the Chaplain will be used at the scene, generally determined by the nature of the incident, and which should be communicated initially.

The Chaplain shall remain at the scene as long as is necessary, and as determined by the situation. He/she should see that a "bridge is built to other caregivers (i.e., other family members, clergy, physician, etc.); and shall follow-up within 48-hours to insure that the needs of the individual/family are being met.