

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Written Directives

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| Title: Peer Support Team | | Pages: 5 |
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POLICY:

This directive establishes the department's Peer Support Team (PST) and provides guidance in the duties and responsibilities of members of the team. It is the policy of the ___ Police Department to use trained and qualified employees in the role of Peer Support Team members in an effort to support personnel experiencing daily, personal and/or work-related stress, as well as during and following critical incidents. The Peer Support Team provides peer support for personnel and their families who experience stresses generated by the role of law enforcement in today's society.

Employees seeking Peer Support Team services should be aware Peer Support Services are not intended to take the place of professional counseling services, but are an additional avenue to seek assistance and resources.

The PST program will not be used for any form of corrective action or discipline.

DEFINITIONS:

PEER ADVISOR: A Peer Advisor is an ___ Police Department employee who may hold the rank of Commander or below and who is selected and trained to provide a first line of assistance and basic crisis intervention to fellow employees.

CONTRACT MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER: A licensed mental health provider contracted by the agency to assist Peer Advisors with peer support contacts and to work in conjunction with the Peer Support Coordinator to provide training to the team.

PEER SUPPORT TEAM COORDINATOR: A Peer Advisor who is selected by the Chief or his/her designee to coordinate all PST services to include team meetings, trainings, callouts, and any other duty assigned by the Chief or his/her designee.

Critical Incident: A Critical Incident is an incident which has the potential to cause significant physical or mental injury.

PROCEDURES:

I. PST Primary Duties and Responsibilities

A. Personal Contacts may be made as follows:

1. Self-Referral: Any employee may request PST assistance for personal or professional matters.

2. Supervisor Referral: Supervisors may refer personnel to the PST Coordinator for assignment to the appropriate Peer Advisor.
 3. Reach-Out: PST members may provide follow-up personal contact on a one-on-one basis to any employee who is involved in a traumatic incident. In addition, PST members may provide personal support to employee(s) as needed.
 4. On-call Status: PST Advisors work on an on-call basis and are available to provide immediate peer support.
- B. Peer Support Team members may be asked to respond to the scene of any critical incident or other location to meet with involved personnel to provide immediate support. PST members may be requested to respond in the following situations:
1. Any critical incident;
 2. Any incident where a supervisor requests response of the PST;
 3. Upon request of an involved employee; or
 4. Any incident which is serious enough to warrant a clear need for PST support.
- C. Peer Support Team members should make a reasonable effort to contact the PST Coordinator prior to responding to a critical incident.
- D. While engaged in a PST role, PST members shall not be utilized for other assignments. In the event personnel directly involved in a critical incident requests a particular PST member, when possible, supervisors shall make every effort to release the requested PST member from their assignment so the PST member may provide peer support to the involved person(s).
- E. Any employee of the Police Department may request PST assistance with personal or work-related matters. A supervisor may also recommend an employee speak with a PST member, but such recommendations do not constitute a supervisory order. PST contact is optional.
- F. Peer Support is not an alternative to discipline. A PST member does not intervene in the disciplinary process. A PST member may provide support for the employee(s) under investigation or during a disciplinary process but should refrain from discussing the incident itself. Further, the employee(s) must be cautioned any information shared with the PST regarding the incident in question may not be confidential based on agency policies and jurisdictional requirements.
- G. PST members will attend regularly scheduled Peer Support Team meetings with the contract mental health provider.

- H. PST members will make appropriate referrals when issues exceed the parameters of peer support.

II. CONFIDENTIALITY

- A. PST members shall clarify whether an interaction is peer support and, if confirmed, specify the PST member role and the parameters of peer support interactions.
- B. PST members will advise and explain the limits of confidentiality with peer support interactions prior to engaging in peer support.
- C. PST members are protected under CRS 13-90-107(m):

A law enforcement peer support team member shall not be examined without the consent of the person to whom peer support services have been provided as to any communication made by the person to the peer support team member; nor shall a recipient of individual peer support services be examined as to any such communication without the recipient's consent.

“Communication” means an oral statement, written statement, note, record, report, or document, made during, or arising out of, a meeting with a PST member.

“Law enforcement PST member” means a peace officer, civilian employee, or volunteer member of a law enforcement agency or other person who has been trained in peer support skills and who is officially designated by a police chief, as a member of a law enforcement agency's PST.

This shall apply only to communications made during individual interactions conducted by a PST member: Acting in the person's official capacity as a law enforcement or peer support team member; and functioning within the written peer support guidelines which are in effect for the person's respective law enforcement agency.

- D. Statements or actions which are not protected by statutory confidentiality or departmental directive include the following:
 - 1. Information received which is indicative of actual or suspected child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, elder neglect, or abuse or neglect of any other statutorily protected class of persons;
 - 2. A PST member was a witness to an incident which prompted the delivery of Peer Support Services;
 - 3. Due to alcohol or other substance intoxication or abuse, the person receiving peer support is a clear and immediate danger to the person's self or others;
 - 4. There is reasonable cause to believe the person receiving peer support has a mental illness and, due to the mental illness, is an imminent threat to himself or herself or

others or is gravely disabled;

5. There is information indicative of any criminal conduct; or
6. Information is disclosed of the person taking actions while representing him/herself as an Police Officer which would discredit or negatively impact the public image of the Police Department.

PST members who are peace officers have a duty to take action when there is information indicative of domestic violence and there is probable cause to believe a crime has been committed. Arrest is mandatory under such circumstances (CRS 18-6-803.6).

III. TEAM SELECTION

- A. The PST consists of at least four (4) members, including one Peer Support Team Coordinator (Commander).
- B. The position of PST Coordinator is an appointed position, selected by the Chief or his/her designee.
- C. Applicants for the PST must submit a letter of interest and qualifications to the PST Coordinator.
- D. Current PST members may provide input before an applicant is appointed to the team.
- E. All PST members must complete a training course on the topic of Peer Support Teams instructed by a licensed mental health provider prior to joining the team.
- F. Actions in violation of this directive may be cause for de-selection from the PST. Additional criteria for de-selection from the PST include breach of confidentiality, failure to attend PST training, or loss of one's good standing with the department.
- G. Any PST member may take a leave of absence from the team when personal issues or obligations necessitate this request. Requests for a leave of absence should be submitted to the PST Coordinator for approval.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

- A. No specific notes regarding the statements made or interactions between PST members and employees seeking assistance will be maintained.
- B. PST members will provide information to the PST Coordinator regarding the number and type of contacts with employees. However, no information which could identify individual employees will be noted. The PST Coordinator will collect this information quarterly.

RULES:

NONE

REFERENCES:

Larimer County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team/Critical Incident Response Policy, Garfield County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team Policy