

Developing a Critical Incident Peer Support Program

Model policy

James D. Sewell



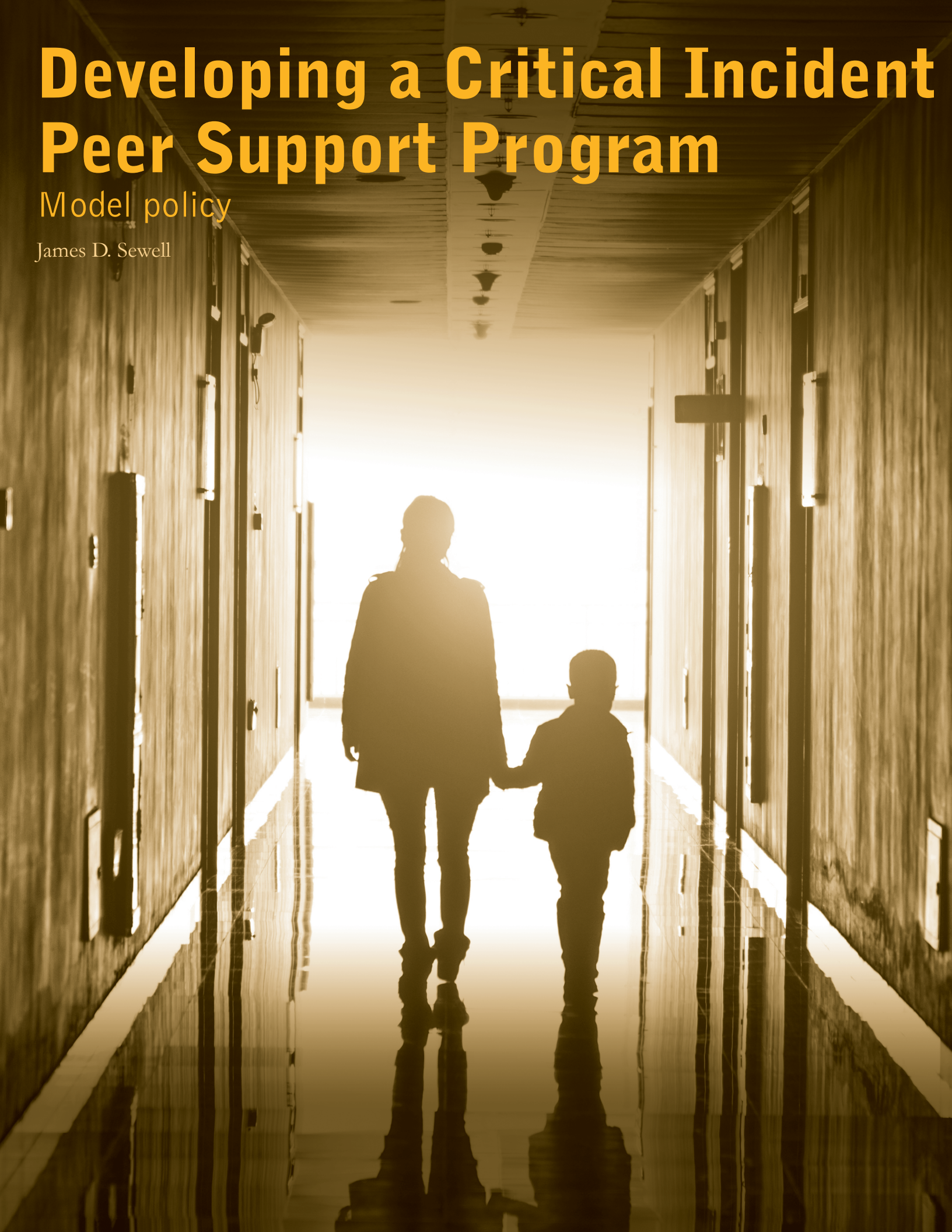
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Introduction

Since 2000, law enforcement executives have become increasingly aware of the impact of occupational stress on the safety and wellness of their sworn and civilian employees. As a consequence, agencies have devoted increased attention to enhanced leadership practices, a greater emphasis on physical fitness, and the expansion of programs that support the psychological and emotional health of their personnel.

Included among the latter efforts have been a proliferation of employee assistance programs; increased use of in-house and contract psychologists, especially in assessing fitness for duty; expanded use of agency chaplains; and better paraprofessional support for their personnel through the development and use of peer support teams.

The idea of peer support dates back to the early 1970s with efforts within agencies—such as those in Boston, New York, and Chicago—to deal with alcoholism in their police ranks. Citing the successes of groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Police Officer Ed Donovan, who had been attending AA meetings to deal with his own abuse issues, formed the Boston Police Stress Program. Donovan and his colleagues were able to convince the Boston Police Commissioner to implement what we would now call a peer support program for police officers and their families, perhaps the first of its kind in the nation.

The peer support concept holds that police employees are more likely to discuss psychological and emotional issues with someone who understands their job and the types of stress they may undergo than with a psychological professional who brings expertise but no such understanding to the conversation. This approach at ensuring the emotional health of law enforcement personnel assumes that a basic level of training is necessary—and empathy is particularly critical—in allowing the paraprofessional to provide necessary support and to be able to listen, assess, and (as necessary and appropriate) refer a troubled colleague to proper and professional assistance. As Kamena and his co-authors have noted:

The mission of a peer support program is to provide emotional, social, and practical support to police personnel during times of personal or professional crisis. It may also offer peer-to-peer assistance in anticipating and addressing other potential challenges or difficulties. (Kamena et al. 2011, 80)

The literature discussing the use of peer support programs to effectively deal with the stress of police employees points to the strengths and weaknesses of such programs. In an early work on using peer supporters, Finn and Tomz (1998) identified benefits and weaknesses of peer supporters. Among the positives, they suggest that peer support personnel

- provide instant credibility and ability to empathize;
- assist fellow employees who are reluctant to talk with mental health professionals;
- recommend the program to other employees by attesting credibly to their confidentiality and concern;
- provide immediate assistance due to accessibility;
- detect incipient problems because of their daily contact with coworkers;
- are less expensive than professionals.

Yet, they caution, peer support members

- cannot provide the professional care that licensed mental health practitioners can;
- may try to offer full-scale counseling that they are not equipped to provide;
- may be rejected by employees who want to talk only with a professional counselor;
- may be avoided by employees because of the fear that problems will not be kept confidential;
- require time, effort, and patience to screen, train, and supervise;
- may expose themselves and the department to legal liability.

Recognizing that peer support programs offer an effective complement to the provision of professional mental health services in contemporary law enforcement agencies, this paper will examine three areas:

1. The elements of an effective peer support program
2. Confidentiality in such a program
3. The activities of five existing peer support programs

Identifying the Elements of a Successful Peer Support Program

In establishing a peer support program within a criminal justice agency, it is important that those responsible for planning and implementation take a comprehensive approach to their task. Robinson and Murdoch (2003), for example, recommend that the following steps be considered when beginning a peer support program:

- Determine support for the program
- Develop a master plan
- Seek input from all relevant sections of the organization
- Develop policy
- Educate the organization regarding the program
- Integrate regional and central functions
- Integrate peer and mental health support
- Build in review

In a parallel approach, the foundational Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) course presented by St. Petersburg College's Regional Community Policing Institute identifies nine elements, subject to further discussion in this paper, necessary for a successful CIPS program:

1. The presence of a successful and high-ranking champion
2. Administrative leadership and support from the agency's chief executive officer down through its management ranks
3. Established policies, procedures, protocols, and practices
4. Selection of a competent and respected team
5. Basic, advanced, and ongoing training of team members
6. Training of agency personnel, especially supervisors
7. Effective "selling" of the program to agency personnel

8. Identification of available resources
9. Peer support of peer supporters during times of crisis

Management championship and agency leadership

Any successful law enforcement program requires the involvement, the support, and ultimately the championship of an individual at the highest level of the organization. The timeliness and comprehensive nature of any program become more likely when leadership is provided by a “big boss” who expresses interest in the effort. For a peer support program, that potential for success is particularly enhanced when that boss is respected within the culture of policing and acknowledged as a leader who is known for the care and support he or she gives the “troops.”

In addition, a successful program requires administrative leadership and support from the agency’s chief executive officer down through its management and supervisory ranks. Too frequently, good programs fail because of inaction and lack of visible support at mid-management and supervisory levels. Staff initiating a peer support program should recognize that there also may be organizational resistance from hardened officers and supervisors who discount any “touchy-feely” approach to policing. Firm leadership, clear direction, and active involvement and support from the ranks of management are necessary to overcome such resistance in its active or passive states.

Policies and procedures

It is important that the agency establish a basic set of policies and procedures governing the administration and use of the peer support unit before its implementation. Initial procedures can be drawn from those developed by existing agencies, some of which are reflected in the appendices, or from model policy guidelines, such as those developed and maintained by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the California Peer Support Association on their respective websites. In 2017, Congress passed the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) to support the ongoing efforts of law enforcement agencies to protect the mental health and well-being of their employees. In response to a Congressional directive, the U.S. Department of Justice published a LEMHWA report in 2019 that includes best practices for creating and maintaining a peer support and peer mentoring program in agencies (Spence et al. 2019).

An important resource when establishing a peer support program is the Peer Support Guidelines developed by the Police Psychological Services section of the IACP and available through that organization's website (www.theiacp.org). These guidelines formally are intended to provide information and recommendations on forming and maintaining a peer support structure for sworn and civilian personnel in law enforcement agencies and include the discussion of issues related to the following:

- The administration of the peer support program
- Selection and deselection of peer support personnel
- The use of mental health consultation services
- Confidentiality
- Role conflict
- Topics of introductory and continuing training

Selection of the team

Selection of a competent and respected peer support team is of vital importance. Those who must access peer support must also believe in the professionalism, communications skills and abilities, and confidentiality of—as well as have trust in—those with whom they deal. Robinson and Murdoch (2003) describe characteristics that the manager of a peer support program would most likely want to look for in potential candidates, i.e., personnel who

- have a good rapport with their colleagues and respect for members of management and the organization's union;
- possess good listening skills and are sensitive to the problems that others experience;
- understand ethical behavior defined by the agency's peer support program, especially in terms of confidentiality;
- display a willingness to learn how to provide good peer support and crisis response;
- have enough time in their personal and professional lives to dedicate themselves to the cause.

Other necessary qualities of effective peer support team members include the following:

- Acceptance of other people who differ in race, ethnic origins, gender, and lifestyles
- Emotional stability
- Trustworthiness
- Ability to connect with others
- Ability to demonstrate empathy
- Self-control
- Self-awareness

As is the case with the employment of good law enforcement officers, the selection process for peer support team members is critical to the ultimate success of the program. Candidates for positions on a peer support team may “nominate” themselves or be recommended by other personnel within the agency; nominations by other members of the team are particularly valuable. Those responsible for selection must ensure the past performance of the individual indicates future success in this new role; that performance evaluations of previous supervisors, both formal and documented and informal through one-on-one conversations, reflect the qualities necessary for this position; and that other personnel in the agency recognize the individual as trustworthy, worthy of respect, and capable of meeting the needs of individuals in time of crisis. Past training and education serve as further indicators of the preparation, interest, and motivation of the individual in providing peer support services.

An oral board should be used as a screening tool to assess communications and observational skills and to evaluate the self-assuredness and self-awareness of candidates for the position on a peer support team. The use of case scenarios during the selection process can allow for insight into the individual’s preparation for the position, potential position-based skills, and ability to demonstrate empathy. An oral interview process also allows screeners to discuss and probe the individual’s prior personal experiences in dealing with crisis and stress, both on and off duty. In addition, candidates for selection on the peer support team should “pass muster” with other members of the team, and a formal internship with the team will allow for direct observation of the individual and his or her capabilities in real-world situations.

Finally, during the selection process, the team must ensure that both the individual's supervisor(s) and his or her family support involvement in peer support. Lack of support and understanding of the demands of the role of a peer support member can lead to unnecessary stress on the new member while performing his or her regular duties as well as on the member and his or her family. The necessary 24/7/365 availability of peer support can add a new and demanding dimension to one's family life, and not all families can adjust to these new responsibilities of the peer. Such stress then becomes a prescription for failure of the individual and potentially the program.

There is, of course, an "other side of the coin" when discussing selection: the removal, or deselection, of peer support members who fail to meet the demands of the job. Kamena and his colleagues in the IACP Psychological Services section have cautioned:

One of the most difficult aspects of maintaining a peer support program is deciding when a member should no longer be a part of the program. It is crucial to have a procedure in place that establishes criteria and a process for deselection from the program. Quality control is essential for the health and viability of the program.

Possible criteria include a breach of confidentiality, the failure to attend training, or the loss of one's good standing with the department. (Kamena et al. 2011, 82)

As they indicate, there are a number of issues that can and should lead to the removal of a member of the team. First and foremost is any breach of the confidentiality promised to those who seek assistance. Failure to maintain defined standards and expectations, whether related to team training or certification or to the peer supporter's law enforcement requirements, are also criteria for dismissal. Discipline separate and apart from the peer's team responsibilities can lead to what Kamena refers to as "the loss of one's good standing with the department," and violations related to the very reasons the team was created, e.g., drunk driving, use of illicit drugs, and domestic violence, cannot be tolerated. Finally, the performance and attitude of some team members may indicate that they are not suited for peer support responsibilities; in no case should a team retain someone who lacks the capabilities, compassion, or motivation to perform successfully in a peer support role.

Training of agency members

In any aspect of law enforcement, there is no substitute for effective training. Basic training for peer support members must provide the minimum skills required for successful performance on the job, including the following:

- Agency expectations, policies, and procedures
- Sources and manifestations of law enforcement stress
- Basic debriefing and de-escalation skills
- Interpersonal communications skills, particularly active listening
- Crisis intervention skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Recognition of symptoms of acute or chronic stress
- Recognition of suicidal warning signs
- Availability of and appropriate referral to local mental health and support resources
- Legal and professional responsibilities as a peer support team member
- Confidentiality concerns

Advanced training should enhance those skills and knowledge given at the basic level and could include more intensive classroom or online training. Certification courses, such as the suicide intervention training developed by the QPR (question, persuade, refer) Institute, critical incident stress management (CISM) offered by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, or the peer support course presented by the Mississippi Regional Counterdrug Training Academy, for instance, are all appropriate for advanced training of these additional professional skills.

Ongoing or continuing training of team members should focus on lessons learned from cases handled by the specific peer support team, on changes and improvements in contacts available in support of the peer support team and its members, and on new developments in the emotional support of law enforcement personnel.

Training of agency personnel, especially supervisors, is also a necessity for a successful peer support program. Such training serves a three-fold purpose: (1) to ensure that personnel can recognize early warning signs of other personnel in distress, (2) to ensure that all personnel know methods and protocols by which peer support personnel can be involved in providing assistance, and (3) to emphasize the importance of peer support to all personnel within the agency.

An important part of the training process is the effective “selling” of the program to agency personnel. An active program of education and training must foster awareness of the program’s existence. It becomes imperative that agency personnel ultimately understand the relevance of the program to meeting their needs and see seeking services of the program as a viable option to dealing with their personal problems.

Part of that marketing effort includes ensuring the agency’s personnel understand when and how to access the resources and assistance offered by the peer support program. The Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) website, for instance, encourages personnel at their training facilities to seek assistance when they are experiencing the following:

- Overwhelming situations impacting you at work, home, or in training
- Intense feelings of discomfort, stress, or confusion
- Significant symptoms that persist longer than six weeks
- Suicidal thoughts or planning
- Other self-destructive behaviors
- Feelings of losing control
- Desire to check in and see if you are okay

Yet simple awareness can only go so far. Word “on the street”—or perhaps in the locker room—must reinforce the peer support program as an effective, timely, trustworthy, and confidential resource serving all elements of the agency. As word of mouth sells restaurants in the outside world, so must that word in a law enforcement agency reflect the credibility of the agency’s peer support program. It is when other officers suggest the program to their peers that it truly becomes effective.

Access to resources

A member of a peer support unit plays a critical role in referring personnel in crisis to appropriate resources within and outside the organization. The program, then, must ensure the identification and cataloging of available resources before a critical incident occurs or an agency member goes into crisis and needs assistance. To be most effective, all resource information must be kept current, and each individual resource should be regularly evaluated on both the quality of its performance and the availability and timeliness of its response to peer support requests for assistance.

The integration of psychological services with peer support services provides the peer support team members with an important resource of their own. When assessing the stability of an officer or identifying and cataloging abnormal behaviors, it is vital that peer support members have access to and can discuss their perceptions with these professional colleagues, whether in the department or providing contractual services.

Peer support: Taking care of one another

Finally, it is imperative for a peer support program and its personnel to recognize the intense stress they personally face in dealing with the problems of other members of their agency, a burden they now have taken onto their own shoulders and must manage.

To that end, peer support personnel should be willing to go through their own debriefing session following intervention with one or more members of the agency. As Lieutenant Glen McGary of the Portland (Maine) Police Department noted, his Peer Support Team always holds a “debriefing of the debriefers” following an incident, affording an exchange of information about the issue as well as providing for their own emotional defusing. Similarly, in Mississippi, members of the statewide Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support are required to contact a member who is not involved in a response and become a recipient of peer support themselves.

Review and Evaluation

As is the case with any effective program in law enforcement, periodic review and evaluation are necessary. The information gathered during such evaluations can best be used to enhance the policies and practices of even a high-performing peer support unit. While made difficult by the confidential nature of the peer-to-peer interaction, a review and evaluation can be successfully accomplished in several ways.

First, as previously indicated, regular assessment of the performance and capabilities of the agencies and organizations to which officers are referred is critical. Discussion among peer support personnel must focus on their experience with particular agencies, both positive and negative, and the peer support coordinator must ensure such feedback is provided to the referred agency. Where negative, the agency should be allowed an opportunity to correct a particular problem; if unsuccessful, another support group should be identified. Similarly, the referral agencies themselves can provide valuable feedback to the peer support team on the performance, professionalism, and communications skills of its team members.

Second, as noted later in this paper, debriefing after a peer intervention allows peer support personnel to express their emotions in a supportive environment with other members of their team. From an evaluation perspective, the debriefing also affords peer support team members an opportunity to openly discuss activities and measures that were both effective and ineffective, as well as to identify challenges that have confronted members. In that sense, it becomes an ideal environment for an after-action review of the team's performance.

Third, many peer support teams maintain limited records on the activities of their members, avoiding the capture of any information that will identify participants. The analysis of such records, coupled with an examination of any high-profile incidents reflecting the successes or failures of a team, can provide a general snapshot of the acceptance and use of the program within the organization. Anonymous surveys distributed throughout the entire agency on a periodic basis also allow for evaluating awareness and use of the program without identifying individuals who have accessed the available services. When conducted on an annual or biannual basis, such analyses can provide timely feedback to those in the administration charged with providing support, personnel, and budget to the program.

As part of the evaluation process, it is important to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the individual team members. Such information can come from the observations of other members of the team, from follow-up with those who have sought assistance, and from the results of the anonymous surveys indicated above. The team should strongly encourage feedback, both positive and negative, from those who have received their services, recognizing that, because of the nature of their interaction with the peer support team, some individuals may want to provide such information anonymously. The ultimate result is to ensure that team members possess and use the abilities, skills, and attitude to successfully meet the needs of the agency and its members.

A Reflection on Confidentiality

Among the other issues that must be addressed, confidentiality may be the most critical. Finn and Tomz, in fact, refer to it as “perhaps the knottiest issue related to using peer supporters” (Finn and Tomz 1998, 16). It is a traditional feeling within the law enforcement community, with a tremendous associated stigma, that an officer who seeks help is a weakling and cannot accept the difficulties of the job. After all, a cop gives help, he doesn’t need help . . . or so some members of the force think. Sworn personnel are frequently unwilling to admit to having emotional problems, and they often fear that their career will be ruined if it is discovered that they have sought psychological assistance. Consequently, officers are afraid that the slightest leak of information—any breach of their privacy and exposure of the confidential nature of their personal issues—will cost them within their agency and among their peers.

Many agencies have accepted the maintenance of confidentiality as a necessary requirement for a successful peer support program and have mandated that protection at least from an internal perspective. The San Bernardino County (California) Sheriff’s Department, for example, recognizes as confidential information “all the dialogue between members of the Peer Support Team and those individuals involved in a critical incident” (San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department Policy Manual, section 1405). Under the San Bernardino policy, exceptions to confidentiality include the following, which parallel those exceptions identified by most agencies using peer support and protecting the confidentiality of their personnel:

- Danger to self
- Danger to others
- Suspected child abuse
- Narcotics offenses
- Domestic violence
- Elder abuse
- Other cases where law or department policy requires disclosure
- Where disclosure is requested by the peer

A number of states, including Virginia, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Maine, and Mississippi, have recognized the need to ensure safety within the peer support environment to a greater legal degree than provided by agency policies and have added a statutory privilege to such communication. In Maine, for instance, all proceedings, communications, and records, with limited requirements for mandatory disclosure, “connected in any way with the work of a critical incident stress management team are confidential and are not subject to compulsory legal process or otherwise discoverable or admissible in evidence in any civil action unless the confidentiality is waived by the affected person.” (ME. REV. STAT. tit. 25, § 4202 (2009).)

Mississippi, which passed one of the nation’s first laws defining privilege associated with peer support activities, holds the following in its criminal code:

A certified peer support member shall not be compelled, without the consent of the emergency responder making the communication, to testify or in any way disclose the contents of any communication made to the certified peer support member by the emergency responder while engaged in a peer support event. This privilege only applies when the communication was made to the certified peer support member during the course of an actual peer support event. (MISS. CODE ANN. § 13-1-22.1 (1) (2006).)

In addition, Mississippi law attaches a criminal penalty to a violation of such privilege, whether by the peer support member or an intrusive member of agency management:

Any certified peer support member who reveals the contents of a privileged communication, or any person who threatens, intimidates, or in any way attempts to compel a certified peer support member to disclose the contents of a privileged communication, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine of not more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than six (6) months, or by both such fine and imprisonment. MISS. CODE ANN. § 13-1-22.1 (4) (2006).)

Examining Styles of Peer Support: A Look at Contemporary Practices

Within these parameters, peer support units or teams have been implemented in a variety of ways. In some areas, such as Mississippi and Utah, statewide teams and individuals provide such support. The Utah Bureau of Emergency Medical Services notes the following on its website, which also provides a debriefing hotline:

“The Utah Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program has been established to assist emergency service workers throughout the State. The CISM Team comprises mental health professionals and peer support personnel who are trained to assist emergency responders in dealing with the stress of their profession.” (Utah CISM Team 2020)

Some smaller agencies, on the other hand, find it appropriate to combine resources in countywide or regional teams. In many mid-sized and larger agencies, resources are available within a single agency. The approach adopted by an agency will largely depend in the size and complexity of the agency, available internal and external resources, budgetary support, and access to training of peer support personnel.

To explore some of the ways agencies have implemented their peer support programs, this operational research turned to five specific organizations and examined their approach to peer support. Each having a unique manner of providing peer support services, these entities are:

- Dallas (Texas) Police Department (appendix A)
- Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (appendix B)
- Hillsborough County (Florida) Sheriff’s Office (appendix C)
- Mississippi Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support (appendix D)
- Portland (Maine) Police Department (appendix E)

In drawing from the experiences of their agencies, professional staffs of each of these organizations were asked to consider and (with the results presented, for the most part, in their own words) discuss several key points:

- The history and longevity of the program
- Where it fits within the agency
- Its basic functions, including how it is activated
- Its involvement in critical incidents
- Reporting requirements, including access to and distribution of reports
- Changes that may have occurred during the history of the program
- Interaction with law enforcement personnel outside the agency
- Statutory protections regarding the confidentiality of information shared as a result of peer intervention
- Recommendations for an agency or group of agencies seeking to establish their own peer support unit or function

The experiences and practices of these agencies offer unique and varying perspectives on the implementation of a peer support program. In Portland, for example, the champion for the Peer Support Team is the Chief of Police, who once served as a peer support team member as he rose through the ranks of the department. In Hillsborough County, the Peer Support Team provides support to agency personnel and their families who are experiencing personal trauma or problems that are not work-related; a separate CISM team responds to on-duty critical incidents. The Mississippi Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support has found it best to minimize formal policies in order to enhance its flexibility in responding to the needs of the personnel it serves. The Peer Support Team for the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers has an especially unique focus: the 59,000 students attending courses at its several campuses and the faculty and staff that support them. The Dallas Police Department, one of the first agencies to implement its own psychological services unit, has gone through a variety of changes through the years to keep pace with a changing workforce and its changing needs.

Summary/Conclusion

The use of law enforcement personnel, both sworn and civilian, as trained peer supporters offers a viable addition to an agency's comprehensive approach to officer safety and wellness. Supplemented by professional police psychological personnel, peer support provides a trustworthy, confidential, and credible method of dealing with the emotional and psychological stress experienced by law enforcement officers and their civilian colleagues. The guidelines established by the IACP, the elements of an effective peer support program discussed here, statutory recognition of the peer support privilege, and the experiences of successful programs such as those identified in this paper, can serve as models for agencies considering the implementation of their own program or for agencies looking to enhance their current operations.



Appendix A. Dallas (Texas) Police Department

An overview of the Dallas Police Department

The city of Dallas, the ninth-largest city in the nation and the third largest city in Texas, is rich in culture and diversity. According to the United States Census Bureau (2012), geographically, the city is approximately 385.3 square miles, comprising 88 percent land and 12 percent water, and has a population of approximately 1.28 million. As the diversity in Dallas continues to grow, with more businesses and residents moving to the city, the Dallas Police Department (DPD) works well at ensuring the demographics of the city is also reflected in its police department. The DPD has approximately 3,800 sworn and nonsworn employees. Similar to the diversity of the police department, the DPD Peer Support Program strives to reflect the demographics and variety of challenges that may be presented by employees. Information contained in this discussion was provided by Dr. Trina Hall, DPD psychologist.

Introduction

Almost everyone has experienced or will experience a stressful situation in his or her lifetime. It is during these times that family and friends come to the rescue. They are able to provide needed support and understanding that help overcome life's problems. The Peer Support Program is one of those "friends" who is available to every DPD employee.

The DPD long ago recognized the value of providing a way for their employees and their family members to deal with personal and professional problems. A successful approach to this problem has been to provide a program which offers nonprofessional (peer) support, in addition to the services provided by the current professional Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and our in-house Psychological Services Unit.

The Peer Support Program is composed of a group of peers who have volunteered to make themselves available to any member of the department (civilian and sworn). This provides a way for DPD employees to talk out personal or professional problems confidentially with someone who, based on a shared or common experience, understands and cares. The DPD recognizes that its most valuable resource is its employees. The goal of the Peer Support Program is to assist peers with stress caused by personal or professional problems and help them continue to be a productive member of the DPD.

History of the DPD's Peer Support Program

The Peer Support Program at the DPD has undergone a number of changes since its inception. It has gone through periods of activation and inactivity as the department's chain of command has undergone changes. The first group of peer support candidates began training in 1992 under the direction of one of DPD's Psychological Services psychologists. Twenty-three officers were selected and completed the 40-hour training to become the first group of peer counselors for the department. A few months later, a second training session was held, and 10 additional supervisors (sergeants and lieutenants) were trained, bringing the total of trained participants to 33. All participants volunteered to serve as peer supporters. Since that time, the program remains voluntary and has approximately 40 team members today. Even when the program went through brief periods of inactivity, a peer support coordinator continued to answer requests for peer support.

As the department recognized the need to reactivate the program in 2012, it was decided that the program would be overseen by one of the psychologists from the Psychological Services Unit and a supervisory level (sergeant or above) Peer Support Coordinator. The DPD expanded its Psychological Services Unit and hired one additional psychologist to oversee the program. Many of the former peer support members had either resigned or retired from the department, causing a need to recruit more participants.

Initially, peers ranged in age from their mid-20s to mid-40s and had between three and more than 20 years of police experience. In addition, the educational level of the inaugural group of peers ranged from some college work to master's degrees. These demographics remain true for the current group of 40 peer support volunteers, although there has been a slight increase in the age of the peer supporter; the oldest member is now in their late 50s.

Program design

The DPD Peer Support Program offers assistance and appropriate support resources to employees when personal or professional problems negatively affect their work performance, family unit, or self. This assistance is confidential, providing it does not violate any law or department regulation. This program is designed to:

- provide emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to employees who express a need for assistance;
- promote trust, allow appropriate anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons using peer supporters within the guidelines of the program;
- develop advisors who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance or referral to professional or alternate resources as required;
- maintain an effective peer supporter training and response program;
- support those who have had family tragedies;
- check on status of illnesses and provide support where desired and needed.

Management support

Resurgence of the Peer Support Program was at the request of one of the command staff chiefs who felt there was a need to give additional support to officers and civilians experiencing personal problems. Staff and command personnel view the Peer Support Program's mission as one of support for their personnel. Individual officers involved in helping their fellow employees will need the support and, sometimes, guidance of their commanding officers. The program's support by the department's staff and command officers continues to be vital to its success.

Departmental policies

The Peer Support Program is officially reflected in the department's General Orders and in a section of the Standard Operating Procedures for the Psychological Services Unit. The established policies have evolved as the program has continued to evolve. To ensure peers are adequately trained to handle current issues, program managers deemed it important to obtain a needs assessment survey from current and former employees regarding the type of stressors that challenge employees on a daily basis.

Selection criteria

To participate in the DPD Peer Support Program as a peer supporter, an individual must first express a desire to be a volunteer for the program. A volunteer may be more committed to helping others than a person who receives external compensation for participation. Volunteers are required to be sworn or nonsworn employees of the department who are at least two years past their probationary period. In addition, they cannot have any work restrictions involving psychological stress or involvement in therapy as a “client” in the six months prior to their desired participation in the program. They also cannot have any ongoing disciplinary action or Internal Affairs investigation.

All interested candidates are asked to complete a Peer Support Team Member Application, which includes a statement of interest, experience with critical incidents, prior volunteer activities, and needed demographic information. In addition, they are asked to submit the name of and a letter from one of their supervisors to support their participation in the program. Candidates also may be asked to participate in an oral interview, which is conducted by a panel of current peer support members, designated supervisors selected by Personnel, the Peer Support Coordinator, and a Psychologist. Additional factors considered for selection include the following:

- Applicant’s communication skills
- Demonstrated desire to help and assist others
- Demonstrated ability to maintain a calm demeanor during times of stress
- Ability to show empathy, respect, and assess the needs of coworkers
- Previous education and training
- Life experience
- Demonstrated ability to successfully work through personal and professional life crisis

Deployment and activation of peer support services

The Peer Support Program at the DPD provides a readily accessible support network of police officers and nonsworn police personnel. They are available for service 24 hours per day, seven days per week, on short-term notice. They may provide one-on-one contact or facilitate a group meeting, if necessary. Any employee who seeks peer support has one central number, a direct line to the Peer Support Coordinator, to call. The department's communications desk also has the phone number for Peer Support in case someone needs to know how to contact the program for help.

The move to one central number is one of the changes made to the current program to help streamline contact and enhance services. Prior to the change, employees were provided with a list of names and individual phone numbers of peers to call for services. As the peer program began to change and with many peers retiring, many of the individual numbers were no longer valid or answered; therefore, needs were not being met. Having only one phone number provides the program with a continuity of services that best meets the needs of the department.

Our hope with the program is to have peers designated at each substation as well as headquarters. In our recruitment effort, we have tried to select individuals of various ranks and levels (within both the sworn and nonsworn areas of the department). Also, given the number of supervisors we have within the program, it was decided that unless specifically requested by an employee, supervisors would not be requested to provide peer support to someone under their supervision.

Training

All peer support team members complete the mandatory Basic Peer Support Training (40 hours) prior to deployment of services. The initial Peer Support Training is intended to provide a basic understanding of techniques in

- crisis identification
- crisis intervention and support;
- communication and listening skills;

- problem assessment;
- stress management;
- assessment skills;
- critical incident support;
- suicide assessment.

A series of periodic support training programs are conducted with the assistance of specialists in additional areas of expertise:

- Problem-solving workshops
- Referral workshops (local resources, e.g., social services, AA meetings)
- Advanced skills workshops
- Alcohol and substance abuse workshops
- Relationship issues
- Domestic violence
- Military support
- Mental illnesses (e.g., depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] symptom recognition)
- Grief management

The Peer Support Coordinator is responsible for maintaining liaison with the DPD's Training Division and outside consultants in the coordination of scheduling and locations of training and workshop sessions. Quarterly meetings are held for all Peer Support Team members. Additional training meetings may be scheduled as needed or requested by the team member. As mentioned earlier, when recruiting participants to the program, we wanted to make sure we identified individuals who have been involved in critical incidents either personally and professionally. As a result, we have subgroups within our Peer Support Program for individuals who were involved in officer-involved shootings or other identified critical incidents, peers who are active or retired military personnel for any peer who is a veteran requesting service, and a group who received additional training in suicide prevention. Having the specialized training and experience in specific areas further enhances our peer program.

Confidentiality

One of the most important responsibilities of a Peer Support Team member is the promotion of trust, anonymity, and confidentiality for employees who seek the assistance of the Peer Support Program. Therefore, communication between a Peer Support Team member and an officer or civilian staff member is considered privileged by the department, except for matters that involve violations of the law or serious misconduct. Pursuant to Texas Health and Safety Code (HSC) 784.003, peer support services are confidential and “may not be disclosed in a civil, criminal, or administrative proceeding.” All contact between peers and officers remain strictly confidential, pursuant to Texas statutory law, and no records, either written or sound recorded, are made.

Reporting requirements

Peer supporters maintain contact with the Program Coordinator regarding program activities and statistical data on program contacts for purposes of program evaluation, including submitting a Monthly Peer Support Contact Log. The Monthly Peer Support Contact Log contains information regarding the number of support contacts made with employees and the number of support contacts performed, as well as the general content area of those contacts. Names of peers and specifics about Peer Support sessions are not submitted on the Monthly Log. Each peer is provided with a Peer Contact form, which consists of information regarding the age range, years of service, and problem category for the peer contact. No names, other than the name of the peer, are associated with the form.

Interactions with other agencies

When the decision was made to reform the Peer Support Program at the DPD, it became imperative to ensure our peers were in contact with neighboring law enforcement and first responder peer programs. We received a few requests to implement a citywide peer support program; however, we decided to focus on our agency first to work with our own police employees. To help link our program with other surrounding law enforcement agencies, we often have representatives from the neighboring police departments participate in our trainings as either a presenter or an attendee.

“Selling” of the program

Because of the level of skepticism then existing in the department, one of our biggest challenges was to sell the revamped program to members of the department. In addition, some staff expressed concern over using the services for fear of being a part of the “gossip mill” that often takes place within law enforcement agencies. To help combat this problem, we tried to select peer supporters who already held good reputations within the department and were already being used as informal support by their colleagues.

Prior to the launch of the program, peer supporters gathered to brainstorm numerous ways to advertise and promote the program to the department. A group of peers created a brochure and flyer to advertise the program. In addition, they are in the planning stages of creating a Breeze video about the program that will be added to the department’s Intranet page. Lastly, we have begun to visit the detail watches to reintroduce the program and answer any questions that staff and officers may have about the program.

One of the other obstacles faced was attempting to work with the different employee organizations within the department to help generate support for the program. The idea of creating a peer support liaison for each of the main organizations was born to help bridge the connection between the peer support program and these different groups. Many of the peers selected for the peer program are also members of many of these organizations, so having them identified as a liaison for the organization was beneficial.

Identification of available resources

One training module for peer supporters covers community and departmental resources that are available to share with peer contacts. In addition to providing the peer supporter with a list of resources, the Peer Support Program at the DPD also tries to invite some of the agencies or programs to peer training sessions so that peers can ask providers direct questions and, if needed, receive comprehensive information during that contact. Peers have expressed satisfaction in regard to feeling informed about the services rather than simply receiving a list of resources without a better understanding of what that resource could provide for them.

Recommendations for agencies looking to establish their own CIPS program

Beginning a Critical Incident Peer Support program at an agency will take strategic planning and strong support from your command staff in order for the program to have a chance of success. Our journey at the DPD has had its share of triumphs and challenges; however, with a great supporting cast, we have been able to endure.

Your program is only as strong as the people who are used to help build a stable foundation for it. Our peers took a sense of ownership for the program by being hands-on with the selection of peers and the format of the program. They have become proactive in reaching out to those who they feel are in need and identifying employee concerns. Trust is an important component of this program and should be discussed openly with participants but also emphasized in promotional material for the program.

Our peers' self-care is essential to make sure they are at their best; therefore, time is taken out at each of our quarterly training sessions to check in with them regarding their own well-being. In addition, any time we have a peer who may have encountered a difficult situation, our Peer Coordinator makes it a priority to contact that peer to offer any needed services. In keeping with that latter responsibility, you want to make sure that, in selecting a Peer Support Coordinator, you have chosen someone who is approachable and available to other peer supporters in case they need assistance.



Appendix B. Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers

An overview of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) trains the majority of federal officers and agents in the United States. In addition to providing training for more than 90 federal partner organizations, FLETC also provides training to state, local, tribal, and international police in selected advanced programs; graduates approximately 59,000 students annually; and is the largest law enforcement training organization in the country. Headquartered on a 1,600-acre campus at Glynco, near Brunswick, Georgia, the FLETC operates additional facilities in Artesia, New Mexico; Charleston, South Carolina; and Cheltenham, Maryland. The FLETC also has oversight responsibility on behalf of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for the International Law Enforcement Academies at Gaborone, Botswana; and Bangkok, Thailand.

Information contained in this discussion was prepared by the FLETC Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Staff.

History of FLETC's Peer Support Program

A critical incident involving the unexpected death of a student at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) in Glynco was the impetus to develop a program that would address the needs of personnel experiencing any form of personal or professional crisis. In 1999, FLETC and its Partner Organization (PO) staff worked together to formally develop what would become the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program.

Today, the FLETC CISM program has three primary and complementary components: (1) Stress Management and Crisis Intervention, (2) Traumatic Incident Management, and (3) Peer Support. These components are supported internally by licensed mental health professionals and certified peer support team members, and externally by a contracted Employee Assistance Program.

Where the program fits in FLETC

Originally, FLETC placed the CISM program in its Behavioral Sciences Division (BSD), which is part of the Glynco Training Directorate and responsible for overseeing all training occurring at FLETC's training site in Glynco. Within a year, FLETC leadership recognized the need to focus the program more specifically on student and staff needs and therefore placed it in the Student Services Division. It later became its own division within the Administration Directorate, where it remained for many years.

In 2012, FLETC formed a new office, the Office of Organizational Health, which consolidated all resources and programs focused on the overall well-being of FLETC personnel, including employee physical and mental wellness, diversity, and employee engagement. The CISM program fits well into this new office, a component of the Director's Office.

Basic functions of peer support

All CISM services, including peer support, are available at all FLETC training facilities to all students, FLETC and PO staff, and their immediate family members. In the event of a critical incident, the FLETC CISM Peer Support Program (PSP) may offer assistance to on-site visitors and contract personnel. In addition, the program may provide crisis intervention and disaster response to the local community or deploy in response to a national crisis or disaster. Those seeking assistance may call the Crisis Support Line, a 24-hour answering service that assures that an on-call counselor or peer supporter will rapidly respond. Peer support is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The FLETC CISM Peer Support Program provides individual and group crisis response. Individual crisis response is provided by what CISM refers to as a "Care and Concern Peer." A Care and Concern Peer is a FLETC or PO employee whom FLETC's CISM has accepted as a volunteer in the CISM Peer Support Program and who has formally trained to provide informal, discreet, and confidential support to individuals in need. The Care and Concern Peer may provide support on a range of issues including general stress, workplace concerns, trouble adjusting or transitioning, grief and loss, relationship struggles, and medical or health worries.

FLETC CISM also provides small and large group critical incident response through its CISM Response Team. This response team comprises Care and Concern Peer volunteers approved and trained to respond to groups in distress following a critical incident. CISM Response Teams are operational at all four domestic FLETC locations (Artesia, NM; Charleston, SC; Cheltenham, MD; and Glynco, GA). All CISM Response Teams follow specific operational and activation protocols to ensure effective, consistent, and safe response.

CISM Response Teams are activated at the time of need by request and “deploy” upon the approval of FLETC management. Teams meet throughout the year for procedural review and skills training with scenario-based exercises. In locations where multiple teams are present, CISM selects and assigns members to teams annually.

Involvement in critical incidents

By request and with approval from the CISM Program Manager, the FLETC CISM Response Team is capable of responding to various groups in distress following a critical incident. These various groups include FLETC and PO staff, students, and state and local emergency personnel. Depending on the size and availability of the CISM team, each site is capable of providing crisis intervention to a single group in distress (known as a “single-mission response”) or multiple groups in need (known as a “multiple-mission response”).

CISM Response Team involvement throughout an operation may include the following:

- Placing a team on “standby” status
- Organizing and deploying an advanced team
- Activating a team or teams immediately
- Returning the team to “stand-down” status

The Activation and Deployment Process includes these basic steps:

1. The call comes in. A critical incident occurs and the affected agency, organization, or office determines there is a need for the FLETC CISM Response Team.
2. Teams cannot be activated or provide response without approval by the Peer Coordinator (PC) or Program Manager (PM).
3. CISM Response Team leaders communicate with the requesting agency, organization, or office to obtain facts about the incident and the people involved.

4. The information is then reported to the CISM Program Manager to determine CISM involvement. If it is determined that team response is needed, the CISM Program Manager contacts FLETC management for deployment approval.
5. Once approved, the request becomes an “active operation.” A CISM Response Team may be immediately called in or placed on “standby” status. For large and complex operations, an “advanced team” may be sent. An advanced team is a small group of peers deployed to the scene in order to meet first with agency, organizational, or office leadership to stabilize and gather up-to-date information, then to gain facts, assess safety issues (physical and emotional), understand scope, identify distress and associated factors, and identify resources and facilities available and needed.
6. The advanced team will report the most accurate and up-to-date information to the Peer Coordinator or Program Manager, who will then determine the following:
 - a. Number of “missions” needed to run
 - b. Number of CISM Response Teams needed to complete these missions
 - c. Resources available and needed
 - d. Facilities available and needed
7. Once a strategic and comprehensive response plan is determined, the Program Manager then updates FLETC management and seeks “approval” from supervisory chain (when necessary). For the CISM Response Team called in, the Peer Coordinator will provide a “staging” and brief team members on the following:
 - a. Up-to-date information regarding the event and the people affected
 - b. Strategic plan, including type of interventions expected to perform
 - c. Assigned roles for the large or small group interventions
 - d. Logistical information pertinent to transportation, use of facilities, supplies, etc.
 - e. Instructions for reconvening and reporting following each intervention or at the completion of the operational plan

8. Prior to finalizing and closing the on-site operation, the following will occur:
 - a. The Peer Coordinator or advanced team member will “back-brief” the requesting agency, organization, or office leadership regarding performed CISM intervention(s) and any plan for follow-up. The back-brief will not reveal any confidential communications.
 - b. CISM Response Team leaders should ensure that all personnel return safely and that each team member is notified of the location for the Post-Action Staff Support (PASS).
 - c. CISM Response Team leaders should ensure that the site is cleared and returned to the condition in which it was found.
9. Following each intervention or the completion of the mission or overall operation, team members must participate in a PASS. It is recommended that a PASS be provided to any CISM Response Team personnel involved in any interventions. If a CISM Response Team member is unable to attend the PASS, the team member is immediately placed on “inactive” status until he or she receives a PASS from the Peer Coordinator or any CISM Specialist.
10. Following the PASS, the active operation is complete and the CISM Response Team returns to stand-down status. During stand-down status, CISM Response Team Members log all one-on-one statistics, return to regular work duties after PASS, continue to follow up with any individuals from the operation, and participate in an “after-action” or “lessons learned,” when necessary.

Reporting requirements

Peers must report monthly statistical data concerning contacts made during each month. Reporting or recording personal or identifiable information is strictly prohibited. Those with access must enter data via a secure computer site. Those without access may email statistics by using a report form provided by the Peer Coordinator. To reduce the likelihood of statistical information being duplicated, the Peer Coordinator records CISM Response Team statistics. All contacts made in a one-on-one (individual response setting) are recorded by each peer in the Individual Peer Stats section of the MOSS site. The Peer Coordinator generates reports quarterly and submits to the FLETC Office of Organizational Health. Data reports are generated to demonstrate program utilization and relevancy.

Changes during the history of the program

In 2008, the CISM Program Manager assigned a CISM Specialist to act as the FLETC Peer Support Program Coordinator. The person holding this responsibility would come to be known as the Peer Coordinator. Current duties of the Peer Coordinator include the following:

- Marketing the Peer Support Program
- Interviewing and vetting potential peer team members
- Maintaining current team roster
- Ensuring supervisory approval of all active peer team members
- Consulting with and supervising peer team members
- Ensuring each peer has met/continues to meet training requirements

Interaction with other law enforcement personnel

The FLETC CISM Peer Support Program interacts with local law enforcement by specific written request of the local department(s) and with the express authorization of FLETC management. Following a local tragedy, departments may request CISM support. Once approved by FLETC management, the CISM response team then mobilizes and is deployed to the agency with the need. The operation can take one day or several, depending on the severity of the event and the reactions that followed.

Statutory protections regarding confidentiality

There are no specific legal statutory protections for peer support activities at this time. Currently, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Traumatic Incident Management (TIM) Directive 254-03 advises:

Information obtained about an employee during any TIM service by peers, TIM support personnel, chaplains, and EAP personnel, etc., is considered confidential and may not be shared with any non-trauma incident management person, except as provided in MD 254-02, Employee Assistance Program.

Recommendations for agencies looking to establish their own CIPS program

Upon reflecting on its history and experiences, staff of FLETC would recommend that the agency

- assess the organization's need;
- secure the proper operational capital;
- build a smart, motivated team of volunteers;
- pay attention to your volunteers;
- use your volunteers' strengths;
- promote, market, and publicize;
- assess effects and change direction, if necessary.

Reflecting on the tenets identified by St. Petersburg College in its training on developing a peer support program, FLETC staff would urge consideration of the following:

A successful and high-ranking champion

Every Peer Support Program needs both commitment and support from the leadership hierarchy and the staff. You may want to ask three questions of both of these groups:

1. Do you see a need for this organization to have a Peer Support Program?
2. Will you support the formation of a Peer Support Program?
3. Are you committed to help make the Peer Support Program a success?

The answers to these questions, as well as many other programmatic questions, may be obtained through a simple needs assessment. If your assessment indicates that there is no recognizable or statistically significant need for a Peer Support Program, then you are done.

Administrative leadership and support from the agency's chief executive officer

The more stakeholders you have involved in the evolution of your Peer Support Program, the more support you will have when you move from a developmental idea into a full-fledged operational program. These stakeholders should be those individuals you have scouted to be possible peers as well as individuals from every level within your organization. The parties involved in the development of your Peer Support Program should be politically neutral, if possible, and should not be involved in matters of dispute. Depending upon your organization's structure, this could include members of the leadership team or upper management, staff associations, and occupational and safety committees, as well as your permanent and temporary employees.

Remember, a collaborative approach works best in most situations.

In summary, capital—your funding, personnel, and supplies—runs your Peer Support Program. If your Peer Support Program is a priority to your organization, you may have more resources at your disposal, which brings up the topic of organizational placement. Where you are placed within your organization's structure can be important. Organizational alignment may have an effect on your program's support, visibility, and viability. Where your Peer Support Program is placed within the hierarchical nature of your organization is more than likely not within your immediate or direct control. Alignments change within organizations, as do climate, personnel, and position; therefore, it is helpful to think through your program's alignment "possibilities," particularly if you are not currently in a favorable position.

Established policies, procedures, protocols, and practices

In general, a broad Peer Support Policy should cover, at a minimum, the unit's

- mission;
- program structure;
- roles and responsibilities;
- standard operating procedures;
- criteria for selecting candidates;
- criteria for removal of volunteers;

- training requirements;
- definitions for basic peer support concepts;
- reporting requirements;
- required documentation;
- ethical practice;
- consent and confidentiality.

Selection of a competent and respected team

There are three questions that you may want to ask yourself when you begin to consider the specific roles that will need to be fulfilled in order for your program to be successful:

1. What are my agency's needs?
2. How can I most effectively and efficiently fulfill these needs?
3. How many people will it take to accomplish this?

The process that you establish for the selection of your peer candidates may be one of the most important and complicated portions of your program development task as a whole. This is where you really get to know your potential peer candidates as people instead of coworkers. Most volunteer candidate selection processes require some type of application, interview, and reference check, in addition to any number of other procedures deemed necessary by an organization's specific mission.

At FLETC, the general rule of thumb as prescribed by the CISM Peer Support Peer is that all peer support volunteers will

- uphold confidentiality;
- display professionalism;
- be a person of integrity;
- show respect for all persons.

In addition, appropriate peer candidates will understand and apply healthy boundary systems in both their personal and private lives. Peer candidates should understand their personal boundary systems and the ethical and legal boundary systems set forth by your Peer Support Program policy.

Basic, advanced, and ongoing training of team members

FLETC Peer Support Team Members are required to do the following:

- Serve and actively participate in one response annually. This response may include simulated learning experiences.
- Complete recertification of Basic Peer Support Crisis Intervention Training Program (BPSCITP) every five years in order to maintain active status. The BPSCITP is five days long and includes in its curriculum key terms and concepts; identifying various stress reactions; identifying various factors that cause stress reactions; assessment of individuals and groups experiencing distress; application of individual, large group and small group interventions to lower the stress response; ethical principles and standards of peer and crisis intervention practice; and planning and organizing crisis response teams. If the team member fails to complete the recertification process, he or she will be placed on inactive status until requirements are met.
- Receive two hours of in-service training annually for continued education for protocol and procedural review and skills refresher training.
- Report statistical information monthly on designated forms.

Ongoing training of agency personnel, especially supervisors

Like many commercial industries, volunteer programs are only successful if they meet their intended goal which, in the case of a Peer Support Program, is for people to be effectively supported. This will only happen if you have volunteers and consumers, so the Peer Support Coordinator will need to develop opportunities during which you can accomplish many of the following:

- “Explain the PSP and its functions
- Dispel the myths associated with asking for help when in need of support
- Educate management and consumers about how your PSP works

- Educate management and consumers about how your PSP is accessed
- Reassure your consumers on matters of confidentiality
- Give feedback on the broad outcomes of the program over time
- Provide management with information proving a return on their investment in your PSP
- Explain changes in the program as it evolves” (Robinson and Murdoch 2003)

Identification of available resources

In the realm of program development, the term *capital* can be used to describe all of a program’s assets, resources, and investments, which can range from desktop computers and automobiles to individual volunteers and the training they receive. The following are considered to be the minimum necessary resources for any viable PSP:

- Program manager or coordinator
- Team members
- Trainers
- Mental health professional
- Chaplain
- Written directive
- Authority
- Defined scope
- Protocols or standard operating procedures
- Supplies
- Vehicles or some other mode of transportation
- Perishable and nonperishable food items

Effective “selling” of the program to agency personnel

A good marketing campaign is an effective way to make sure your organization’s personnel learn that a Peer Support Program exists, learn what your Peer Support Program does and does not do, and recruit new team members. The forums, formats, and materials you choose to use to help recruit potential peer candidates should focus on how an individual can benefit from being a member of your team. The focus would shift when you are marketing your Peer Support Program’s services. Those opportunities and items would be geared toward your potential consumers, who in this case are the individuals who are eligible to use your PSP’s services.

Peer support of peer supporters during times of crisis

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation recommends “debriefing” the Peer Support Team after every emotionally charged or major event. It has coined the term “debriefing the debriefers” for the PASS. The PASS is a tool to help team members mitigate their personal risk of developing burnout, compassion fatigue, or vicarious traumatization as a result of their involvement in providing peer support services.

Team members may take a variety of actions to help make their team as strong and resilient as possible:

- Encourage self-awareness
- Encourage professional and personal development
- Learn one’s strengths
- Learn one’s limitations
- Communicate one’s needs
- Practice healthy living
- Maintain work/life balance
- Have a mentor
- Be a mentor
- Practice healthy stress management
- Lessen one’s use of less healthy coping mechanisms

- Provide and encourage consultation
- Provide and encourage supervision
- Provide and encourage recreation

Resources

First responder resources

Bureau of Indian Affairs Branch of Wildland Fire Management. “Welcome to the National Interagency Wildland Fire Critical Incident Stress Management Website.” U.S. Department of the Interior. Accessed October 7, 2020. <https://gacc.nifc.gov/cism/index.html>.

FLETC resources

Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers. “Resources.” U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Accessed October 7, 2020. <https://www.fletc.gov/resources>.



Appendix C. Hillsborough County (Florida) Sheriff's Office

An overview of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office

Hillsborough County, Florida, is the fourth-largest county in Florida, encompassing more than 1,200 square miles with a population exceeding 1.2 million. There are more than 800 square miles in the unincorporated area of the county for which the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office provides direct law enforcement services to residents.

Since 1845, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office has taken on the task of providing effective law enforcement services for the population within Hillsborough County. One of the largest in the nation, the sheriff's office employs more than 4,000 sworn and civilian personnel. The sheriff's office provides enforcement in the areas of patrol, court services, detention, and civil process.

There are times when any of our employees may experience personal trauma, either on duty or off duty. Sheriff David Gee and his staff take pride in providing care for the employees of this agency. That is why our agency has two resources, Peer Support and Critical Incident Stress Management teams, in place providing a first response for the employee upon request to provide intervention and assistance.

Information in this discussion was provided by Chaplain John Garbreana of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. Chaplain Garbreana serves as the Peer Support Coordinator and CISM Team Liaison for the Sheriff's Office.

History of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team

The Peer Support Team, active since 1995, is composed of volunteer employees willing to help other employees and their families in a time of need. The team provides "nonprofessional" support to employees and family members who are affected by personal trauma

or personal problems, attempting to mitigate emotional stress during the course of their situation. It is the intent of the team to provide support to the employee upon request by the employee, the employee's supervisor, or a coworker.

The Peer Support Team is housed organizationally under the Human Resource Bureau, within the Department of Operational Support, one of the agency's four departments. Supervision is provided by a staff officer and team coordinator. We currently have 28 employees who actively serve on the team. Within this group, we have two teams of six identified as Family Care Team members. These teams give support to the employee and family who experience a death, whether the deceased is an employee or a family member.

Training of Peer Support personnel

The initial mandatory training for all new peer team members consists of eight hours of instruction. The topics include the following:

- Intervention as a first responder
- Stress management
- Resiliency
- Team building
- One-on-one intervention
- Reporting
- Confidentiality

The entire team meets twice a year for two hours for continuous training. In addition, the Family Care Team receives specialized training in

- dealing with death;
- line-of-duty death;
- working with funeral homes;
- coordinating a funeral or memorial service with the family;
- team building.

All instruction is given by mental health professionals, funeral service professionals, and experienced clergy. In addition to in-house training, special educational training for team members is sought by the team coordinator throughout the year. Attendance is based on budgetary allowances and manpower constraints within the work unit of the employee. Peer Support is not a budgeted item, so training funds are provided through the Training Division or Human Resources Bureau when funds are available.

Activation and deployment of Peer Support personnel

Team members are activated upon request. Activation takes place when the Peer Team Coordinator or a Staff Officer is notified, either by telephone or email. A call-out then is made by the coordinator for any available volunteer at the time of the incident. Many times just one team member is assigned to a case, unless after making the initial assessment the coordinator recognizes a need for additional help. Many of the cases involve one-on-one intervention, transportation to and from doctor's visits, grocery shopping for the homebound employee, and providing nonprofessional home care and even child care, if needed for a short period of time.

In the event of the death of an employee or family member, and upon request by the employee or family member, the coordinator will activate a Family Care Team for deployment. The team will be assigned to the family throughout the course of the crisis. The intent is to provide support to the family during their time of grief and loss. In a line-of-duty death, the Family Care Team will automatically be deployed to assist the family, working as a liaison with the Sheriff's Office Command Staff, and for funeral services. Employees who may be affected by the death will receive support from other peer team members as needed.

Reporting requirements

Reporting forms consist of Contact Sheets and Follow-up Contact Sheets. These forms are confidential, and an employee's identifying information is not given on the reporting forms. A case log maintained by the coordinator reflects a case number, date of event, peer assigned, and nature of the call. An annual report is submitted to Sheriff's Office staff for their information and to justify the existence and continuing need of the Peer Support Team.

Confidentiality of information

The element of confidentiality is stressed to the team members throughout the training and activation for service. There is no current Florida statute protecting team members for non-professional services; however, by agency policy we do hold and maintain accountability for confidentiality when working with employees. There are exclusions to reporting that include contemplating suicide, harming someone else, and criminal behavior.

Interaction with other agencies

The Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office also networks with the Tampa Bay Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM), which provides crisis intervention to first responders experiencing on-duty trauma or critical incidents that negatively affect their work or personal well-being. The Sheriff's Office CISM Team Members serve as volunteer responders in one-on-one interventions, crisis defusing, and critical incident debriefings. These employees are trained through the Regional Team that sponsors training provided by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. The role of these first responders and critical incident volunteers also is a nonprofessional role.

Summary information

It should be emphasized that, in Hillsborough County, the Peer Support Team and CISM Team are completely separate functioning teams in our sheriff's office operations. Specific differences include the following:

- The two teams have different roles and different training.
- Peer Support has a coordinator along with a staff officer, whereas the CISM Team has an HCSO Liaison Team Leader and a HCSO Staff Liaison.
- Peer Support is activated by the Team Coordinator, whereas the CISM Team is activated by the Administrator on Call for the Regional CISM Team.
- Peer Support responds to personal crisis not work-related, with the exception of a Line-of-Duty Death. CISM responds to on-duty critical incidents.
- The Peer Support Team is governed by the Sheriff's Office Operational Procedure 562.01, and the CISM Team is governed by Operational Procedure 213.02; copies of these policies follow this discussion.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office—David Gee, Sheriff**Standard Operating Procedure****Number: GEN 213.02****Date: 03/27/97 — Revision: 07/15/14 — Reviewed 07/15/14****Subject: Critical Incident Stress Management****I. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to define guidelines in regard to Critical Incident Stress Management.

II. SCOPE:

This procedure shall apply to all Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office personnel and their families.

III. DISCUSSION:

Deputies, police, and other emergency service workers are sometimes involved in traumatic or highly stressful events, and may experience some form of postincident stress related symptoms. Most officers suffer no long term ill effects; however, some experience continuing or delayed stress related reactions to those incidents. Without professional intervention, those employees may continue to experience detrimental effects and may show declining work performance, deterioration of family relationships, or increased health problems.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a therapeutic and educational intervention process designed to minimize the impact of critical incidents on deputies, police and other emergency service workers. It involves peer group support during, immediately after, and in the days following a critical incident. The CISM program is designed to complement the agency's existing stress management programs that include stress awareness classes and consultation with a psychological professional. It is available to both sworn and non-sworn employees.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Critical Incident** - A situation faced by deputies, police officers, or emergency service workers that may cause unusually strong emotional reactions, and have the potential to interfere with the ability to function either at an incident scene or at a later time. **Note:** What is a critical incident for one person may not be for another.
- B. **Stress Reaction Symptoms** - Physical and emotional symptoms that originate with a specific critical incident may include nightmares, flashbacks, fatigue, nausea, concentration and memory problems, anxiety, depression, intestinal problems, etc.
- C. **CISM Team** - A multi-disciplinary team composed of a psychologist, trained mental health professionals, and peer debriefers from various emergency services, including deputies, police, fire, EMS, dispatchers, hospital personnel, etc.
- D. **Peers** - Volunteers who have been trained to provide support to emergency service workers after a critical incident. Volunteers have experienced the same pressures and job experiences as those they seek to help.
- E. **Debriefing** - An organized group discussion with deputies, police, or other emergency service workers who have experienced a critical incident. The discussion of the event is designed to mitigate the potential for long-term stressful reactions. Participants talk about their actions, thoughts, and reactions to the stressful event. The debriefing is led by the CISM Team. A debriefing is *not* a critique of agency operations and performance issues shall not be discussed.
- F. **Defusing** - A "mini-debriefing" that is not as detailed, lengthy or structured as a full debriefing, and performed immediately after an incident is over. It allows for peer support, information, and ventilation of feelings. In many cases, defusing may eliminate the need for a debriefing.
- G. **Demobilization** - Demobilization services are used at large scale, lengthy and highly intense events, such as airplane crashes, long term civil disturbances, natural disasters, etc.

- H. **Peer to Peer Debriefing** - An individual debriefing and educational session performed at the incident scene, immediately pursuant to a critical incident. The peer to peer debriefing allows for immediate intervention to begin on behalf of the affected personnel. Nothing precludes a peer to peer debriefing in the days following a critical incident should that be necessary.
- I. **CISM Staff Liaison (HCSO)** – A member of the Sheriff’s Office command staff designated to assist the on-scene commander at an incident that requires CISM services. The Staff Liaison will assist by assessing the situation and deploying CISM team members for the purpose of defusing, demobilization, or peer to peer intervention with the affected personnel.

V. PROCEDURE:

- A. It shall be the policy of the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office to initiate CISM when an incident is identified as a critical stress-related incident. Such incidents include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Death or serious injury to a Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office deputy or employee.
 - 2. Death or serious injury to a citizen resulting from law enforcement or detention operations.
 - 3. Death or serious injury to an emergency service worker when Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office personnel are involved.
 - 4. Any incident that is charged with profound or overwhelming emotion to deputies and employees involved, such as incidents of extreme danger, incidents involving severe injuries or fatalities, incidents that attract unusually intense media coverage, etc.
- B. Supervisors perceiving a need for CISM services shall notify the CISM Staff Liaison to request team activation. In the event the Staff Liaison is unavailable, the CISM may be contacted through the Hillsborough County Emergency Dispatch at 813-681-4422. Any deputy or employee who has difficulty dealing with an incident, or is aware of another such employee, may request CISM services through a supervisor.

- C. The CISM Team Liaison may arrange a defusing or debriefing, depending on the specific circumstances.
 - 1. If immediate response is needed, the shift/bureau commander shall arrange for the affected employee(s) to meet with the CISM Team.
 - 2. If a delayed response is sufficient, the CISM Team shall set up a debriefing for the affected employee(s), as soon as practical.

- D. The scene commander of a major incident shall determine the need for demobilization services. These services can be coordinated for all emergency service workers at the scene.
 - 1. Demobilization services provide for:
 - a. A break or rest area for units in continuing service at the event.
 - b. Information and support as deputies leave the scene, and an opportunity for ventilation of thoughts and reactions.
 - c. A place for command officers to give closing remarks or incident updates.
 - 2. CISM Team members not needed or engaged in incident activities may handle demobilization services.
 - 3. CISM Team members shall report to the Staff Liaison or his designee for assignment at an incident scene.

- E. Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office employees who are CISM Team members and are called for CISM activities while off duty shall be placed in an on duty status.
 - 1. If already on duty, employees shall be permitted to participate in CISM functions, as workload allows.
 - 2. Due to the area wide responsibilities of the CISM Team, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office CISM Team members may respond as needed to debriefings for other agencies and in other counties.

- F. CISM sessions shall be held in a location selected to ensure as much privacy as possible. Participants are encouraged to speak freely in an atmosphere of support and mutual respect. Confidentiality shall be maintained. Employees exhibiting continued difficulty in resolving reactions to critical incidents shall be referred to the Employee Assistance Program for further assistance.

- G. Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office employees on the CISM Team shall follow the team's protocols and procedures manual, when performing CISM activities.



Appendix D. Mississippi Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support

An overview of the Mississippi law enforcement community

With a 2014 population of nearly three million, the state of Mississippi is protected by about 10,500 sworn law enforcement officers in 82 sheriffs' departments, 174 municipal agencies, and seven state agencies. As of 2019, the Mississippi Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support has trained and certified 457 officers, chaplains, and dispatchers throughout the state to serve the needs of these personnel. Information contained in this appendix was prepared by Timothy J. Rutledge, the current Director of the Alliance.

LEAPS—A historical perspective

In 1991, a Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics (MBN) agent attended a law enforcement shootings seminar dealing with traumatic events and their aftermath. Briefly discussed was the need for critical incident stress debriefings as developed by Dr. Jeff Mitchell. The agent brought the concept back to his agency and developed the agency's policy on the matter. He also created a wallet-sized "shooting card," available to each agent as a guideline for handling shootings. Word spread quickly around the state that the MBN had the ability to offer assistance in shootings, and an unofficial peer support program began.

In 2005, the Director of the Bureau of Narcotics became Mississippi's Commissioner of Public Safety and called on the agent who unofficially administered the program to create a formal statewide program. At its onset, the program was called Critical Incident Response and Care for Law Enforcement (CIRCLE). Within a few weeks, however, it was determined that the need for family and relationship help, suicide education and prevention, financial counseling, spiritual counseling, and a host of other issues was equally neglected by the profession in regards to caring for its own. The program changed its name to the Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support (LEAPS) and initially used short and outside training venues to create membership. From the beginning, any law enforcement officer who had been trained in critical incident stress debriefings was granted membership in the Alliance.

Who makes up the alliance?

LEAPS is quite diverse in its membership. Its trained members reflect all ages and races; many different religions and denominations, including atheism; and differing sexual orientations. LEAPS includes various levels of law enforcement experience ranging from rookies to senior officers. There are high-ranking members, including elected sheriffs, and field-level personnel. A number of dispatchers, chaplains, spouses, and civilians serve in the nonsworn category. Significantly, LEAPS has many military veterans, a crucial element in providing support to Mississippi's many military veterans currently in law enforcement. Our bottom line at LEAPS: Diversity in our response capability is necessary to relate to all officers who may be in need.

Retired members frequently remain in service to LEAPS. Retired members have an instant rapport with others in the program and do not answer to leadership in agencies; as a result, they offer a sense of enhanced confidentiality. Retired members have been through many of the situations faced by current personnel and therefore offer unique experiences to those in need.

Because members often change agencies, get promoted to assignments that hamper deployment for LEAPS, or leave law enforcement altogether, constant training is necessary to maintain ample numbers for the desired 30-minute response time to an officer in crisis.

Program oversight

In 2009, the newly appointed Commissioner of Public Safety and Director of the Bureau of Narcotics did not want LEAPS to be a separate part of the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Given a choice to remain with the DPS—specifically the state academy—or become a standalone volunteer organization, the director of LEAPS chose to become standalone. LEAPS is now all volunteer with no single agency bearing any oversight whatsoever.

This structure works extremely well as it prevents any political influence and control over the activities of LEAPS personnel. LEAPS has successfully resisted several attempts of political influence throughout its existence. It is vital that a peer support team not be controlled by agency heads who not only come and go but also can be easily influenced by political officials and parochial mindsets.

Training curriculum and educational efforts

By 2007, LEAPS had developed and implemented its own unique curriculum that still is being presented. Although the courses have evolved significantly, the core curriculum has remained the same since 2007 and continues to serve as the backbone of the program. The 32-hour basic curriculum encompasses a variety of topics, including the following:

- Law enforcement stress
- Officer-involved shootings
- Relationship enhancement
- Recognition of mental disorders
- Line-of-duty deaths
- Counseling
- Suicide recognition and prevention

Of the 32 hours of class time, 12 hours are spent discussing high stress events such as shootings. Sections of the curriculum on Survival Stress and Officer-Involved Shootings consider the full gambit of shootings and how LEAPS peers should respond.

Although no statistics are maintained, the director estimates that an officer-involved shooting occurs in Mississippi every 12 days. LEAPS has conducted research and training in the aftermath of shootings and has been able to recommend policy changes, training, and direct support to departments when shootings occur. One finding resulting from such research, for example, concerned the removal of a firearm from a deceased suspect's hand. Little or no training is given on this specific issue. At the Regional Counterdrug Training Academy (RCTA), an Advanced Peer Support class recognized that when a gun was kicked from a downed suspect's hands, frequently the gun would discharge. Although all training scenarios were conducted with Simunitions, the results would have been identical with live ammunition. This practical research demonstrated the necessity of officers getting backup quickly and manually removing any weapon from an unconscious or dead suspect's hand.

LEAPS members are constantly responding to calls for assistance. Most frequently, LEAPS members assist other law enforcement officers with relationship issues. LEAPS members receive a two-hour class on relationship issues as part of the 32-hour certification. Although this class provides members with only the fundamentals, it is adequate to allow

basic communication skills to be shared in relationships. LEAPS members often assume the role of “referee” and become a moderator for troubled law enforcement relationships, whether personal or professional.

As a result of such relationship training, LEAPS members also travel to agencies for two-hour classes with officers and their spouses. The classes are usually conducted at night so that spouses may attend. In these fundamental but very effective classes, LEAPS peers discuss relationship issues unique to law enforcement, the recognition of stress warning signs, recognition of being suicidal, and enhanced communication skills.

The 32-hour curriculum also includes a session on recognizing behavioral disorders. Again, although the class is basic, it allows the members to recognize officers and dispatchers who may need behavioral health assistance and provide their administrators and supervisors with a layperson’s opinion when behavior of an officer or civilian employee becomes questionable. A host of resources is available to peer support members for referral of officers in crisis to a higher level when necessary. Without this tool, law enforcement administrators and supervisors would be grossly lacking in their ability to help their personnel stay healthy. This function also provides administration with a mechanism for accountability to the public. Administrations often use LEAPS as a first level “evaluation” of officers who exhibit symptoms of instability.

Upon graduation from the initial certification program, students are required to perform defusings and counseling sessions on one another. The term “debriefing” is not used, as many counseling sessions do not involve a “critical incident,” one of the requirements of the Mitchell Model. The RCTA class allows officers to safely discuss any issue one-on-one with another peer support member. This not only allows for ventilation of long-held emotions but also reinforces the importance of maintaining the trust of fellow officers.

The RCTA training is also unique in that real-life situations and incidents are discussed. Other classes use hypothetical situations for safety, simplicity, and trust issues, and this method is well accepted for developing the mechanics of counseling. LEAPS, however, determined in its first training that actual events allow for opportunities of emotional healing that officers may not receive elsewhere. Many members repeat training sessions to relive the experience, reinforce their skills, and continue to heal their own long-time emotional injuries.

Early in the program’s existence, a small grant of \$18,000 from the DPS paid for subsistence when responding members required overnight travel. The grant also paid for the costs of the certification schools at the state academy, including meals and lodging. In early classes,

behavioral health professionals participated with some honoraria paid by the grant. However, most professionals volunteered their time to the school. In addition, the grant funded brochures and posters for marketing the new concept to law enforcement across the state.

As of 2019, LEAPS has conducted 34 basic certifications, three advanced classes and three Train-the-Trainer classes. Hundreds of four-to-eight-hour classes have been conducted by members for agencies across the south. These classes are conducted at no cost to the participants or their agencies by using RCTA funding.

LEAPS continues to train officers from other states at the RCTA; in fact, seven of the 34 classes were conducted outside of Mississippi. Some 300 officers who have received training from LEAPS have established teams in their own states. LEAPS has trained personnel in multiple agencies throughout Texas and is negotiating with the Texas Commission of Law Enforcement to require a formal peer support response in any high stress event.

Training venue

In August 2009, the training venue moved from the Mississippi State Law Enforcement Academy to the RCTA in Meridian, Mississippi. From this location, officers and dispatchers from other states began attending the training. It was quickly in high demand and, for many agencies, the only training of its type.

Early in the program, members to be trained were selected based on their reputation in law enforcement, their ability to maintain confidentiality, their ability to communicate well, and their willingness to help other officers. Since the training has moved to a U.S. Department of Defense–sponsored academy, attendees are no longer hand selected as they were in the beginning.

When classes are conducted at the primary facility in Meridian meals and lodging are also paid for by the RCTA, funded through the U.S. Department of Defense, National Guard Bureau (NGB), Counterdrug Program. There are a total of five academies in the NGB's nationwide Counterdrug system, but the Mississippi RCTA is the only academy that offers peer support training. Because classes must have a counterdrug nexus, undercover stress, search warrant stress, and other stressors unique to drug enforcement are discussed. To contribute to the nexus, the curriculum was developed by a 30-year narcotics veteran.


Sharing information about the program and its activities

LEAPS often conducts training for individual departments upon request. As part of the LEAPS marketing effort, members frequently travel to neighboring departments to leave business cards and brochures and to conduct a five-minute “roll call” briefing. All of this material and personal contact markets the program to officers across the state. LEAPS members also conduct a four-to-eight-hour class in each academy across the state to ensure that new officers are familiar with and use the program. The LEAPS website also has a “contact us” section, allowing officers to reach a LEAPS member and obtain confidential support. This feature is used by officers across the nation, not just in Mississippi.

LEAPS members are supplied brochures, which are downloadable from its website, for distribution in their geographic area. The website also has a members area, requiring a password, for members to print vital information sheets in a time of crisis. These sheets include general counseling reminders, High Stress Event defusing sheets for incidents other than shootings, an Officer-Involved Shootings defusing sheet, Death Grief Sheets for both pre- and post-funeral, Debriefing Cards, and several other important “go-by’s” that allow even the newly trained peer member to perform his or her duties. The website makes the information available to the member 24/7 and everywhere.

LEAPS suggests the issuance of wallet-sized “shoot cards” by every department to each of its officers (see figure 1 for an example from the Byram [Mississippi] Police Department; a sample card also may be found on the LEAPS website). The card, drawn to match department policy, provides the officer and the supervisor with step-by-step instructions for handling the immediate aftermath of a shooting and notes their individual responsibilities. In addition to training individual departments, LEAPS also assists in the drafting of department policy regarding the response to any high stress event.

Figure 1. Sample "shoot card" issued by Byram (Mississippi) Police Department

What to do if You're Involved in a Shooting	What to do if You're Involved in a Shooting
<p>Officer Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call for back up in PLAIN ENGLISH and render aid ● Make all reasonable attempts to secure the suspect(s) and scene for the safety of bystanders and responding back-up first responders ● Identify crucial evidence when help arrives ● Don't make any statements to the media, other officers, supervisors beyond the initial briefing of the first responding supervisor. ● Call family once you've left the scene to advise them you're okay. ● Don't discuss the matter between officers and witnesses ● Don't complete any reports for at least 12 hours ● Stay off the phone ● Never relinquish your weapon until it is replaced by command staff 	<p>Supervisor Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure the welfare of the officer(s) involved and immediately request additional resources as needed. ● Move officer(s) involved to a quiet space and arrange for their transportation to the station. ● Interview officer(s) involved only to the extent to ascertain a brief understanding of the incident. ● Advise the officer(s) involved not to discuss the incident with anyone except personal or agency attorneys, department investigators, until the preliminary investigation is done. ● Notify Command Staff at the earliest possible moment. ● All officer(s) involved to notify their families that they are okay. 

Activation of peer support

LEAPS can be activated by an individual member when any crisis occurs. There is now ample LEAPS membership to provide peer support within 30 minutes of an event, anywhere in the state. In the beginning of the program, it became clear that local law enforcement officers and dispatchers should be the backbone and provide the vast majority of membership. While state and federal officers participated, presentations at sheriffs' and chiefs' conferences solicited the involvement of local officers. It was explained that when an incident occurred in any city or county, a neighboring certified member would respond. We quickly learned that an officer will discuss the incident for 30 minutes, then complain about his or her department or boss for hours!

For these reasons, we thought it best not to involve members of the officer's own department when an intra-agency response can be avoided. Chiefs and sheriffs agreed and sent their officers to the training to become certified. An informal agreement among chiefs and sheriffs allowed for their officers to reciprocate responses, and the same-agency response issue was quickly settled. In times of major crisis, such as line-of-duty deaths, initial intra-agency response is permissible and expected. All follow-up action, after the immediate response, however, is controlled and conducted by outside agency personnel.

Each call for help is dynamic and very unlike other seemingly identical situations. This uniqueness makes training difficult and makes each response become unique to the situation. LEAPS members are required to call a member who was not involved in the incident or response and become a recipient of peer support themselves. Most members use another member that attended the same initial training session.

Mentioned previously were the outside resources used by LEAPS. Although LEAPS uses one particular behavioral health system more than others, there are several counselors used by LEAPS across the state. A number of medical doctors also volunteer to assist LEAPS when necessary. One out-of-state and two in-state in-patient facilities are used for longer term treatment needs.

LEAPS recognized that in-patient treatment mechanisms pose unique difficulties for law enforcement and will not allow an officer to be placed in a treatment mechanism where that officer may be forced to reside with another patient he or she has arrested. This occurs frequently because of drug use, domestic violence, and mental illness. For these reasons, officers in south Mississippi will avail themselves of in-patient treatment in the north of the state, and officers in the north use southern in-patient facilities.

LEAPS has gained a reputation to the point that behavioral health specialists refer patients for counseling and training. Historically, it has been recognized that the best treatment mechanism for alcoholics may not be a professional but other alcoholics. This same rule applies to law enforcement officers. Most behavioral health specialists have two issues difficult to overcome: (1) the inability to relate to an officer and (2) the lack of trust from the officer. With peer support, these two obstacles are immediately overcome.

Initial reporting requirements

LEAPS' initial state grant required the forwarding of statistics to the DPS, Division of Public Safety Planning, but only solicited the number of contacts LEAPS made with law enforcement officers each month. These contacts included shootings, suicidal officers, traffic accidents, physical altercations, relationship issues, internal discipline issues, high stress events indirectly experienced by officers, and health issues. The LEAPS members relayed their contacts to the director, who compiled and transferred them to DPS. This was done for approximately six months. When more than 1,000 contacts per month were submitted, the director quickly urged DPS to stop the reporting requirement. While LEAPS continues to provide peer support for all of these issues, no statistics are kept.

Policies and procedures

There are no written policies and procedures for LEAPS. While many teams have been trapped into thinking that detailed policies and procedures are necessary, LEAPS has operated quite successfully for 10 years without having formal policies and procedures in place.

Confidentiality

In 2006, the same MBN agent authored the nation's first peer support law with a criminal penalty for violating the privilege. The 2006 Mississippi Legislature passed what would become Mississippi Code 13-1-22.1:

“(1) As used in this section, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(a) “Certified peer support member” means a law enforcement officer, fireman or emergency medical technician of an emergency service agency or entity who has received training in critical incident stress management and who is certified as a peer support member by the State Board of Health or the Department of Public Safety to provide emotional and moral support to an emergency responder who needs those services as a result of job-related stress or an incident in which the emergency responder was involved while acting in his official capacity.

(b) “Peer support event” means any debriefing, defusing or counseling session conducted by a certified peer support member that involves the emotional or moral support of an emergency responder who needs those services as a result of job-related stress or an incident in which the emergency responder was involved while acting in his official capacity.

(2) A certified peer support member shall not be compelled, without the consent of the emergency responder making the communication, to testify or in any way disclose the contents of any communication made to the certified peer support member by the emergency responder while engaged in a peer support event. This privilege only applies when the communication was made to the certified peer support member during the course of an actual peer support event.

(3) The privilege shall not apply if:

(a) The certified peer support member was an initial emergency service responder, a witness or a party to the incident that prompted the providing of the peer support event to the emergency responder;

(b) A communication reveals the intended commission of a crime or harmful act and such disclosure is determined to be necessary by the certified peer support member to protect any person from a clear, imminent risk of serious mental or physical harm or injury, or to forestall a serious threat to the public safety; or

(c) A crime has been committed and divulged.

(4) Any certified peer support member who reveals the contents of a privileged communication, or any person who threatens, intimidates, or in any way attempts to compel a certified peer support member to disclose the contents of a privileged communication, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine of not more than Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than six (6) months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.”

As the reader will note, this law, placed in the evidence section of the state legal code, uses the word “privilege,” the strongest word in the legal profession, to convey the protection given for peer confidentiality. Furthermore, the law created a criminal penalty for certified members who breach the privilege and for any person who threatens, intimidates, or attempts to compel a certified peer support member to reveal a privileged communication. The law also covers peer support among firefighters and emergency medical services.

In 2014, a proposed statutory amendment clarified who certifies whom, added dispatchers and retired emergency responders as both peer support members and covered responders, and closed a loophole in the privilege that occurs when a participant of a group session reveals the content of a privileged communication. Although the bill passed both state houses, it died in conference committee. Attempts will be made to reintroduce the amendment in the future.

A look ahead

In June 2015, LEAPS reached its 10th anniversary. Other peer support programs are more experienced, but the methods employed by LEAPS work well for the Mississippi law enforcement community. From the beginning, LEAPS had one great advantage: No other peer support systems had been tried in Mississippi. After some initial resistance, LEAPS quickly gained support from all law enforcement.

A singular advantage in LEAPS' beginning was the support and leadership of the Mississippi Commissioner of Public Safety. Perhaps the most significant recommendation for states wanting to create a statewide program would be to first garner the support and direction of the chief law enforcement officer of the state. This makes passing legislation, gaining support from state law enforcement agencies, and obtaining the respect of chiefs and sheriffs much easier.

There is a bottom line: Because of LEAPS, thousands of officers have a better mindset for survival by knowing there will be other officers supporting them when tragedies occur. Dozens of officers are alive because LEAPS intervened when they were seriously contemplating suicide. Hundreds of officers have felt first-hand what supporting officers can do with a small bit of training and a large amount of compassion. Relationships are enhanced when the partner of an officer or dispatcher better knows and understands the law enforcement profession and its unique demands. Faith in the occupation is renewed when fresh ideas are conveyed by trained LEAPS members proclaiming "we can do better for ourselves." Peer support provides all of these and so much more.



Appendix E. Portland (Maine) Police Department

An overview of the Portland Police Department

Portland is the largest city in the state of Maine and the county seat of Cumberland County. It has a current population (as of 2017) of approximately 70,000 and falls within a larger metropolitan area of 250,000. Policing services are provided by the 164 sworn members of the Portland Police Department.

The police department's Peer Support Team has 22 members, including sworn officers, civilian personnel, and dispatchers, with two chaplains. The information contained in this discussion was provided by Lieutenant Glen McGary, the unit's supervisor and a member of the Peer Support Team since 1999.

History of the Portland Police Department Peer Support Program

The Peer Support program in the Portland Police Department started in the mid 1990s. Lieutenant McGary reflects on his own involvement in the program:

"Its conception was before my time, but I watched as it moved from its infancy to the strong, well-respected program of today. I was involved in a shooting in 1999 with one year on the department. I knew of the program and was part of a critical incident debriefing after the event. Many officers in that debriefing were new to the process and concerned about being called into court about the debriefing, and refused to talk. It was run by paramedics that no one knew. I had worked many years in Search and Rescue and was familiar with this process. No one spoke, until it got to me. I talked about what happened, about how I felt about it, and how it was affecting my sleep and thoughts. Some of those veteran officers then began to talk about what their role in the situation was. This was productive for my healing, and I then chose to go to an on-site academy in Massachusetts to learn how to be a debriefer. Since then, several officers have been sent to training, and we now hold all of our own debriefings and help out local agencies when they need help.

Our program works well as it comprises officers, dispatchers, and chaplains who are selected by the peer population. This creates a group of officers that is ready to help out and is trusted to maintain the confidentiality of the officers who seek their help.

Where it fits in the agency

We are officers who are embedded in the agency; Peer Support is one of our specialties. I run the Community Policing Division and receive calls, emails, and visits from officers and supervisors who want to talk. I have a great network of resources for all avenues of help: personal, marriage, substance abuse, etc. The chief and I work together to promote and administer the program. He and the command staff see the importance of a healthy officer, and those of us in Peer Support are given the room to help others at will.

It should be noted that the chief is in full support of the team and was an original member. The other members of the command staff are supportive, contributing to the success of the team in dealing with our personnel.

Basic functions of peer support, including how it is activated

Officers can contact individual Peer Support members, as there is a tri-fold informational brochure with our names and numbers on it. This handout is available in the roll call room and locker rooms and at the Officer Information desk. I have found that word of mouth is one of the best ways to get officers to reach out to us. Someone will be chatting with a friend about a problem and that friend will either give a Peer Support member's name to refer him or her or reach out to one of us to help.

As for Critical Incident Debriefings, shift commanders or sergeants can call the departmental human resources office when they see an incident that may require a debriefing. Sergeants are versed in defusing and pull their team together after an event. All officers receive a shift log that describe incidents that happened during the evening; this also can trigger a debriefing as a member will bring it to the human resources office's attention. In addition, if we hear of a terrible incident that officers sound like they're having a tough time with, we will activate a debriefing. In short, the department is well versed in defusing and debriefings and uses them enough so that we all know what to look for and when to act.

The department's human resources office receives a list of officers, dispatchers, and sometimes firefighters to attend the debriefing, making it mandatory (see the department's standard operating procedure included at the end of this discussion). Because of our preparation of personnel and the importance attached by the administration, officers understand the importance of the debriefings and are usually willing to attend.

Training of peer support personnel

New members of the Peer Support Team receive in-house training on conducting initial debriefings, then are sent to an on-site academy for further formal training and certification in peer support and critical incident debriefing. That initial in-house training involves senior peer members who discuss their experiences and explain what resources are available to team members. Annually, the team holds 24 hours of refresher training and debriefings to maintain its members' certification.

In addition, the team always holds a "debriefing of the debriefers" following an incident, affording an exchange of information as well as their own emotional defusing. Regular meetings of the Peer Support Team provide additional training opportunities on issues such as suicide, substance abuse, and new resources available to the team.

Psychological back-up to the team is provided by a clinician from the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and from the team's in-house mental health liaison.

Reporting requirements

The department's human resources office maintains records for each debriefing that has taken place. These records include the number of individuals attending each debriefing; however, no names are recorded on these documents. It should be noted that the human resources manager also serves as a member of the Peer Support Team.

Changes during the history of the program

The program is always changing with the addition of new members and the involvement of different groups. We first started with a handful of officers and a counselor from the City's EAP, which provides clinical staff used by all City departments. We then added

three chaplains and another mental health worker. We noticed that we were lacking communications support, so we added some dispatchers. We continue to send people to training for Critical Incident Debriefing and have helped the fire department with their Peer Support Program.

Our next step is to include a support avenue for spouses and family members. We provide support and assistance to spouses and family members when we are made aware of a situation, but we want an easier transition to provide support for them.

Interaction with law enforcement personnel outside the agency

We are available to assist other agencies in our area by calling and offering our services when we become aware of an incident. We have offered to help build other Peer Support Teams within other agencies as well; no outside agencies have yet taken advantage of our offer.

Statutory protections regarding the confidentiality of information

Title 25, Chapter 501, Subsection 4202, Maine Revised Statutes, provides protection to information exchanged in peer support sessions. It specifically holds:

1. Information confidential. Except as provided in subsection 2, all proceedings, communications and records, including, but not limited to, information concerning the identity of a person seeking or being furnished assistance, connected in any way with the work of a critical incident stress management team are confidential and are not subject to compulsory legal process or otherwise discoverable or admissible in evidence in any civil action unless the confidentiality is waived by the affected person. Statistical data not identifying a person seeking the assistance of a critical incident stress management team must be made available for statistical evaluation and may not be made available for any other purpose.

2. Mandatory disclosure of information. Unless protected by a privilege of law recognized by this State, a member of a critical incident stress management team must disclose to appropriate federal, state or local government agencies or law enforcement agencies the following types of information:

- A. An admission by a person seeking the assistance of the critical incident stress management team that the person has committed a crime;
- B. A disclosure of information by a person seeking the assistance of a critical incident stress management team that must be reported pursuant to any applicable law; or
- C. A disclosure of information by a person seeking the assistance of a critical incident stress management team that would lead one to reasonably think that the person seeking assistance is a danger to that person or to another person.

Information disclosed under this subsection is no longer confidential unless it is otherwise designated confidential by statute.'

Recommendations for an agency looking to establish its own peer support unit or function

It is a mistake not to select Peer Support Team members from the unit's peers. When the members are volunteers or selected from management, there can be a concern about confidentiality. We work well under the premise that everything is confidential and that our goal is the person's well-being. When members need the team or when we need younger officers more reflective of time on the job, we survey our officers for the names of peers with whom they would feel comfortable talking. We then compile a list of personnel we can seek out as potential members. We talk to those officers and, if they want to join the team, begin their training."

Portland Police Department Standard Operating Procedure

Number 108 — Effective date 09/23/2012

Subject: Peer Support

I. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to maintain a Peer Support Team, whose members have agreed to provide confidential support to any department employee, at any time, for the purpose of stress management.

II. Policy

The Portland Police Department will assist employees through crises or personal problems by providing a network of readily accessible employees. In addition to lending confidential informal support, this network of employees may provide referrals to outside support systems such as appropriate professionals or the City of Portland's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

III. Definitions

- A. Peer Support Team - A team of sworn and civilian employees, appointed by the Chief of Police, who are recognized by their peers as reliable and knowledgeable, and who act as a confidential support person to their colleagues. They may be used informally to help mitigate problems, or as a facilitator for a critical incident stress debriefing or defusing. Most team members are not certified as counselors, but have been trained and informed of outside support programs for referral purposes.
- B. Critical Incident: A work-related incident that causes, or has the potential to cause, an employee to experience physical or emotional stress. It is the department's position that stressful situations occurring during off-duty hours have the ability to impact an employee's job performance and general well-being while at work. Therefore "work related" will be interpreted broadly for the purpose of this policy.
- C. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD): A seven-step, peer-driven, group crisis intervention tool designed to assist those who have been exposed to the same critical incident. It is a formal process generally conducted 24 to 72 hours after an incident.

- D. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): A comprehensive, systematic program for the mitigation of critical incident related stress, the primary goals of which are to mitigate the impact of a critical incident(s), accelerate the recovery process and assess those who might need additional assistance. CISM includes interventions such as CISDs and defusings.
- E. Defusing: A three-step, peer-driven, group crisis intervention tool designed to assist those who have been exposed to the same critical incident. It is less formal than a CISD, and is generally conducted within eight hours after an incident, e.g., at the end of a shift. It is one of the most frequently used CISM techniques.
- F. Stress Management: an umbrella term for any intervention designed to help employees deal more effectively with stress in their lives.

IV. Administration

- A. The Peer Support Team will be maintained under the administrative direction and control of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- B. The Peer Support Team will consist of members appointed by the Chief of Police based on input from department personnel.
- C. The Peer Support team is responsible for providing the opportunity for personnel to participate in in-house stress management interventions and programs.
 - 1. These may include, but are not limited to, pre-incident education, or Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) interventions such as a “defusing,” a full “debriefing” (CISD), or individual crisis intervention.
 - 2. Team members are responsible for being familiar with outside resources and will assist any requesting employee in gaining access to those resources. Referrals may be provided to qualified mental health professionals, including EAP, and/or private psychological providers.
- D. Peer Support Team members will establish the general direction of the program and maintain its well-being consistent with sound administrative practices.

- E. Any team member who is approached by an individual must keep such contact in the strictest confidence. Except as provided below, all contacts, proceedings, communications and records, including, but not limited to, information concerning the identity of the individual(s) seeking assistance or participating in stress management functions of the team are confidential.
1. Mandatory Disclosure of Information (25 M.R.S.A. §4202(2))
 - a. Unless protected by a recognized privilege, a team member must disclose to the appropriate authority the following types of information:
 - i. Any admission by a person seeking assistance that he or she has committed a crime;
 - ii. A disclosure of information by a person seeking assistance that must be reported pursuant to any mandatory reporting laws; or
 - iii. A disclosure of information by a person seeking assistance of the Team that would lead one to reasonably think the person seeking assistance is a danger to that person or another person.
 - b. Statistical data that does not identify anyone seeking assistance or participating in a stress management team function may be maintained for analysis (for example, the number or frequency of CISDs in a one-year period), but may not be made available for any other purpose.
- F. Peer Support Team members shall not be involved in the investigation of any incident in which they are acting in a peer support role with those involved in the same incident. Peer Support Team members shall not be questioned by anyone, including those investigating the incident, in regard to any information obtained in a peer support capacity.
- G. If a Peer Support Team member receives any legal documents requesting information or requiring testimony related to their work as a Peer Support Team member, they should refer the request to the Police Attorney.

- H. Any conversations between an employee and a Peer Support Team member are not to be recorded in any manner.
- I. Peer Support Team members may, if approved by the Chief, be utilized to assist other agencies requesting such assistance.
- J. New officers will receive training about the Peer Support and EAP program during orientation and their FTO period.

V. Procedures

- A. A list of Peer Support Team members, including their best contact numbers, will be posted and available to all employees who may contact any team member at any time.
- B. When Peer Support Team employees become aware of any situations that may require immediate intervention, they will make appropriate inquiries or take other appropriate actions.
- C. The Shift Commander shall arrange for the assistance of the Peer Support Team as soon as possible regarding officers involved in any police shootings, serious accidents, assaults or any critical incident that causes or has the potential to cause Department personnel physical or emotional stress. The Peer Support Team may contact all of the officers directly involved in the incident as necessary.
- D. Personnel involved in traumatic events may be granted time off with pay as deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police. Such time would be counted as administrative leave and would not affect an individual's accrued vacation or sick time balance.
- E. The Chief of Police or his/her designee may mandate evaluation/counseling by a qualified police psychologist for personnel involved in a critical incident. Employees mandated to undergo evaluation/counseling may be placed on administrative leave during this time and will not return to duty until cleared by a medical professional.

VI. Critical Incident Stress Management

A. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

1. It is the responsibility of the Shift Commander to notify the Chief of Police that a critical incident has occurred.
 - a. Any employee can suggest a debriefing to the Shift Commander, any department supervisor, the Police Human Resources Manager or a Peer Support Team member. This suggestion may come in the form of an anonymous request.
 - b. Types of incidents in which the CISD model is followed:
 - i. Line-of-duty death
 - ii. Serious line-of-duty injury
 - iii. Suicide of a co-worker
 - iv. Multi-casualty incident/disaster
 - v. Line-of-duty shooting
 - vi. Loss of life of another (police involved)
 - vii. Accidental death of a co-worker
 - viii. Significant event involving a family member
 - ix. Prolonged incident with loss of life
 - x. Knowing the victim of an incident/event
 - xi. Incident/event involving excessive media coverage/judgmental incident. (Wherever possible, involved officers should be notified of impending media coverage.)
 - xii. Any significant incident/event

2. If a debriefing is deemed necessary, the Chief of Police or his/her designee will notify qualified personnel in order to facilitate an appropriate response.
3. **Mandatory Attendance.** The Chief of Police or his/her designee may mandate a debriefing for personnel for any significant incident/event at his/her discretion. Officers will be compensated accordingly.

B. Critical Incident Stress Defusing

1. The Department encourages the use of defusings as necessary.
2. Any supervisor may initiate a defusing at any time he/she deems it potentially beneficial to his/her team.
3. The supervisor may mandate a team member to attend a defusing during their shift.
4. It is recommended that the defusing occur before the completion of the shift on which the incident occurred.
5. It will be required, of all attendees, to maintain confidentiality regarding the content of the defusing.

- C. On-Going Education.** Peer support team members may, on various occasions, offer instruction on stress, stress management and coping strategies.



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About the Author

James D. Sewell was appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) on May 23, 2003, and retired from that agency on January 27, 2005. During his tenure with the FDLE, he held a variety of leadership positions, including Deputy Commissioner; Regional Director of its Tampa Bay Regional Operations Center; Director of the Division of Criminal Justice Information Systems; and Director of the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute. He also served as Chief of Police for the City of Gulfport, Florida, for nearly five years. In addition, he held positions with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Florida State University Department of Public Safety, where he began his law enforcement career in 1973.

Dr. Sewell holds a BS, MS, and PhD in Criminology from the Florida State University. He has published two textbooks and more than 40 articles, principally on law enforcement management and law enforcement stress issues, in academic and professional journals and is a graduate of the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute Chief Executive Seminar (eighth class) and Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy (114th session).

About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 130,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office–funded training organizations.
- Almost 500 agencies have received customized advice and peer-led technical assistance through the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative Training Center.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, round tables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, <https://cops.usdoj.gov>.

This comprehensive project focused on strengthening programs that help families support officers in mental or emotional crises or considering suicide. The suite of six publications includes four reports documenting innovative interventions currently being used around the country, one protocol for agencies on how to address an officer suicide, and a resources abstract. This publication, *Developing a Critical Incident Peer Support Program*, discusses the use of peer support programs to effectively deal with the stress of law enforcement officers nationwide. Recognizing that peer support programs offer an effective complement to the provision of professional mental health services in contemporary law enforcement agencies, this paper examines three areas—(1) the elements of an effective peer support program, (2) confidentiality in such a program, and (3) the activities of five existing peer support programs.



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

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To obtain details about COPS Office programs,
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