
Peer Support

214.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Irvine Police Department recognizes the value of providing an “in-house” Peer Support Program for department personnel and their family to help support managing both professional and personal stress. The Peer Support Team will consist of department personnel who are trained to provide support and/or assist the employee in obtaining professional resources.

The Peer Support Team will provide assistance and support to Department personnel after traumatic incidents or events. The team will also provide support when personal or professional stress negatively affects the employee’s work performance, personal well-being, or relations with others. The team will work cooperatively with mental health professionals and will refer department personnel and family members to professional resources when needed or requested.

214.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

The Peer Support Team is designed to work cooperatively with the department’s contracted mental health professionals, The Counseling Team International (TCTI). TCTI should be consulted by the Peer Support Team any time there is a question regarding appropriate resources for department personnel. TCTI may be contacted 24 hours a day at 800-222-9691.

214.3 CSP CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

The Peer Support Team will also work cooperatively with the Community Service Programs Crisis Response Team. Members of the Crisis Response Team are professional crisis counselors who work with chaplains and contracted mental health professionals to ensure the emotional well-being of law enforcement personnel during and after a critical incident.

214.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

The success of the Peer Support Program will be determined greatly by the observance of confidentiality. It is imperative that each member of the Peer Support Team maintain strict confidentiality with regard to information communicated between department personnel and the Peer Support Team member. Conversations between Peer Support Team personnel and department personnel are not privileged communications under the California Evidence Code. The department however will respect the confidentiality of conversations between Peer Support Team members and Department personnel with the following exceptions:

- (a) Information concerning the commission of a crime
- (b) The employee or a third party is a danger to themselves or others
- (c) Communication in which the law enforcement personnel's intent to defraud or deceive an investigation into a critical incident is revealed

Disclosures under these exceptions will be reported directly to the Program Manager, who will determine the proper course of action.

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Limitations to confidentiality, as outlined above, will be explained to department personnel prior to any official contact between Peer Support Team members and the employee. The Peer Support Team member will remind department personnel of these limitations throughout the contact, if needed. The Peer Support Team member will assist department personnel in obtaining professional resources if additional confidentiality is needed.

214.5 PEER SUPPORT TEAM STRUCTURE

The Peer Support Team shall be structured as follows:

- (a) Program Manager: A lieutenant or commander will have management oversight of the program.
- (b) Program Coordinators: Two supervisors will be Program Coordinators. The Coordinators will be selected by the Program Manager with approval of the Chief of Police or his designee. Coordinators are responsible for the day to day operations of the team, training, budget, coordination with other department supervisors, and maintaining anonymous statistical data regarding program usage. Coordinators will report directly to the Program Manager.
- (c) Team Members: Members of the Peer Support Team will be selected from department personnel. The size of the team will be determined by the Program Coordinators and Manager.

214.6 MEMBER SELECTION / RETENTION

Peer Support Team Members will be selected based on the following criteria:

- (a) Motivated by a desire to assist their fellow employees
- (b) Ability to maintain confidentiality
- (c) Possess above average communication skills
- (d) Willingness to work within the guidelines of this policy
- (e) Agree to be on-call and willing to respond at any hour to assist Department personnel and/or their families
- (f) Participation in a selection process
- (g) Off probation at time of appointment

The selection process will be determined by the Program Coordinators and Manager, and will include an interview and nominations by department personnel. Peer Support Team members should be willing to commit a minimum of two years to the program if selected.

The Peer Support Team is not considered a Specialty Assignment under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Participation in this program is considered a non-compensated collateral duty assignment and team members may be removed at any time. Grounds for removal include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Failure to maintain confidentiality

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- (b) Failure to attend assigned training or meetings
- (c) Conflict of interest between the employee's duty assignment and participation in the program

214.7 ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS

Peer Support Team members provide support and assistance in times of stress and crisis. The responsibilities of a Peer Support Team member are as follows:

- (a) Convey trust and anonymity and assure confidentiality within this policy to Department personnel that seek assistance from the program.
- (b) Respond at any hour to assist Department personnel and/or their families following a critical incident.
- (c) Respond to Department personnel's request for peer support or assistance.
- (d) Attend assigned training and scheduled meetings.
- (e) Act as a liaison between department personnel and mental health resources.
- (f) Be available to department personnel for additional follow-up support.
- (g) Maintain contact with the program Coordinator regarding program activities.

214.8 TRAINING

Newly selected Peer Support Team members will receive the following training:

- (a) Basic Peer Support
- (b) Basic Critical Incident Stress Management
- (c) Prevention and Recognition of Depression and Suicide

Peer Support Team members will receive semi-annual training in the following areas:

- (a) Effective listening
- (b) Critical incident stress management
- (c) Debriefing and defusing techniques
- (d) Post-traumatic stress
- (e) Problem-solving skills
- (f) Relationship termination
- (g) Grief and loss
- (h) Assessment skills
- (i) Referral follow-up

214.9 ACCESSING PEER SUPPORT

The Peer Support Team is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all Department personnel. There are Peer Support Team brochures available throughout the station and

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substation. Department personnel may contact a member of the team in person, by phone, or by email.

214.10 CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

The Peer Support Team is intended to be a resource available to department personnel during and/or after a critical incident. These incidents include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Officer-involved shootings
- (b) Incidents involving an employee's death or serious injury
- (c) Incidents involving the death or serious injury to a child
- (d) Response or involvement in a mass casualty incident
- (e) Any incident likely to trigger an emotional response from the employee and/or affect the employee's ability to perform their duties in the future
- (f) Any other incident deemed appropriate by the on-duty manager or field supervisor

In the event of a critical incident, on-duty manager or field supervisor should contact one of the Peer Support Team Coordinators. If the coordinators are unavailable then the Peer Support Manager should be contacted. The on duty manager or field supervisor should provide the Coordinator with a synopsis of the event and the number of involved employees. The Coordinator will determine how many Peer Support Team members are needed and will coordinate the team's response. The Coordinator will also contact the CSP Crisis Response Team Coordinator or The Counseling Team International if needed.

On-duty Peer Support Team members may be utilized if they are not directly involved in the event and they are not needed for field duties. Peer Support Team members should contact the on-duty manager or field supervisor prior to contacting involved employees. The on duty manager or field supervisor should brief the Peer Support Team member(s) on the event and identify the involved employees.

All employees involved in the incident will be given the opportunity to meet with members of the Peer Support Team; however, employees may decline assistance. In instances where the employee does not wish to speak with members of the Peer Support Team, the team members will ask the employee if they would like to speak with the Department Chaplain, a member of the CSP Crisis Response Team (CRT), or a licensed mental health professional from The Counseling Team International (TCTI). The Peer Support Team member will help facilitate contact with the Chaplain, CRT member, or TCTI if requested.

Department personnel that are involved in a critical incident will be given the opportunity to identify a specific member of the Peer Support Team that they would like to respond on their behalf.

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214.11 OVERTIME COMPENSATION

Peer Support Team members are entitled to overtime compensation as set forth in the team member's applicable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) when engaged in peer support activities.

Members of the Peer Support Team are encouraged to meet with department personnel seeking assistance while on duty, if possible. Approval to meet with an employee while off-duty must be approved by one of the Peer Support Coordinators or any member of command staff.

In the event a Peer Support Team member is called in to assist after a critical incident, that team member is entitled to receive overtime compensation.