

PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST TEAM

Peer Support Specialist Team

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction into the formation and implementation of an official Peer Support Specialist Team for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department employees and family members.

Mission

The mission of the Peer Support Specialist Team is to provide the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department personnel both sworn and non-sworn emotional support through pre-incident education, spousal family support, on-scene support and post-incident support as needed.

The Peer Support Specialist Team will consist of Police Division members who have been specially trained, are dedicated to providing emotional support and appropriate referral if and when needed, and work in conjunction with mental health professionals who specialize in providing support to first responders.

Goals

1. To provide a positive emotional support system that will aid Police Division members in addressing and resolving situations affecting their personal and professional environments.
2. To provide a bridge between the employee and the Police Division to identify and assist with resources available to them.
3. To cultivate and promote the physical, emotional and social health of employees.
4. To develop and implement a peer support specialist team training program.
5. To work in conjunction with local and / or regional peer support teams to promote cross-agency cooperation and assistance across peer teams.

Operating Guidelines

The purpose of the Peer Support Specialist Team is to prevent or lessen the potential negative impact of stress upon Police Division members by providing emotional support, information and assistance.

The Team will provide the Police Division with emotional support through one-on-one and group discussions, pre-incident education, education in stress management, spousal/significant other support, on-scene support, and post-incident support.

The Peer Support Specialist Team will consist of dedicated Police Division members of any rank or position, who are specially trained in peer support and crisis intervention techniques. The Team will work in conjunction with a team of mental health professionals (clinical consultants).

Team Composition

The Peer Support Specialist Team will be comprised of the following:

Lieutenant Colonel, Deputy Chief, Bureau of Community Policing: The functions of the Deputy Chief are:

- 1) Authorize funding and training to include travel.
- 2) Authorize program policy.
- 3) Approve all requests for assistance outside the Department.
- 4) Approve membership into the program.

Commander CIT/Employee Wellness Unit: The functions of the commander are:

- 1) Manage and oversee the Peer Support Specialist Team.
- 2) Develop, advise, and implement program policy.

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- 3) Develop, advise, and implement educational training and funding.
- 4) Authorize the activation of the team for large-scale incidents.
- 5) Develop, interview, advise and approve membership into the program.

Clinical Consultant: The clinical consultants manage all matters related to the psychological or clinical aspects of the program. The clinical consultant is a licensed healthcare professional in the State of Missouri. The Clinical Consultant team will have 3-5 consultants. The functions of the clinical consultant are:

- 1) Consult and advise on all of the clinical aspects of the program.
- 2) Offer clinical support and guidance to the team leader.
- 3) Assist in securing relevant training and continued education materials for the Team.
- 4) Assist in development of policy.
- 5) Act as a liaison between the Team and other mental health professionals supporting the Team.
- 6) Be available as reasonably possible for consults with Peer Support Specialists in case of an emergency.
- 7) Assist with selection of Team members.

Peer Support Specialist Team Leader: A team leader is a senior member of the Team. This position is not a promoted position and Police Division rank does not define who is eligible. Selection of the Peer Support Specialist Team Leader will be made by the Commander of Behavioral Health Unit, the Lieutenant Colonel Deputy Chief of Bureau of Community Policing and the Clinical Consultants. Team Leaders will be selected based upon reputation, leadership skills, and a willingness and desire to serve in this capacity. The functions of a Team Leader are:

- 1) Assist in managing the Team.
- 2) Assist in deployment of Team.
- 3) Facilitate recruitment of new members.
- 4) Act as a Peer Support Specialist Team member.
- 5) Team Leaders will be selected from each Area Station.

Peer Support Specialist Team Member: Team members are the backbone of the program providing emotional support, resources and referral. Their functions are:

- 1) Provide crisis intervention and basic support for the Police Division and their families.
- 2) Provide referrals to behavioral health professionals where needed to include BJC Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and external resources that are insurance providers, or professional contacts following the process as defined in in the Peer Support Specialist Policy.
- 3) Triage and consult the Clinical Consultant in a crisis incident and provide recommendation what crisis intervention services are needed.
- 4) Assist the St. Louis County Police Department Peer Team as needed.
- 5) Conduct and / or triage critical incident group debriefs.
- 6) Will adhere to the policy set forth in HB1355.
- 7) Assist in educating the Police Division about the Team and supportive services.
- 8) Assist in deploying and implementing peer support.

Team Activities

- 1) The Peer Support Specialist Team will consist of 20-24 Police Division members who have successfully graduated peer support team training.
- 2) Each Peer will sign a confidentiality agreement.
- 3) Peer support is not a substitute for professional counseling. Peer Support Specialists are not trained mental health professionals and may not diagnose nor treat mental health conditions. They are to listen and facilitate resources as appropriate.

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- 4) All peer support contact and activities are voluntary. Police Division members may use or reject peer support.
- 5) Police Division members who fail to meet Police Division expectations, on a performance improvement plan, or on administrative leave during an investigation, will not participate in peer support activities as a Team member.
- 6) Mandatory Team training will be held twice yearly.
- 7) Team members are encouraged to attend other appropriate trainings as offered either internal or external.
- 8) Two (2) days off per year will be provided for Team members.
- 9) Team members will attend / participate in debrief sessions as offered or as needed.
- 10) Team members will adhere to the policies outlined in HB1355 as listed below:

HB1355

1. Any communication made by involved personnel or a Peer Support Specialist Team member while in the course of the role as a Peer, and any oral or written information conveyed in or as the result of a peer support session, are **confidential and may not be disclosed by any person participating in the peer support counseling session.**
2. Any communication relating to a peer support counseling session that is made between a Peer Specialist, between the Peer Specialist and the supervisors or staff of an employee assistance program, or between the supervisors or staff of an employee assistance program, is **confidential and may not be disclosed.**
3. The provisions of this section shall apply only to peer support counseling sessions conducted by a Peer Support Specialist Team member:
 - a. The provisions of this section shall apply to all oral communications, notes, records and reports arising out of a peer support counseling session. Any notes, records, or reports arising out of a peer support counseling session **shall not be public record and shall not be subject to the provisions of chapter 610.** Nothing in this section limits the discovery or introduction into evidence of knowledge acquired by any law enforcement personnel or emergency services personnel from observation made during the course of employment, or material or information acquired during the course of employment, that is otherwise subject to discovery or introduction into evidence.
 - b. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any:
 - i. Threat of suicide or criminal act made by a participant in a peer support counseling session, or any information conveyed in a peer support counseling session relating to a threat of suicide or criminal act;
 - ii. Information relating to abuse of spouses, children, or the elderly, or other information that is required to be reported by law;
 - iii. Admission to criminal conduct;
 - iv. Disclosure of testimony by a participant who received peer support counseling services and expressly consented to such disclosure; or
 - v. Disclosure of testimony by the surviving spouse or executor or administrator of the estate of a deceased participant who received peer support counseling services and such surviving spouse or executor, or administrator expressly consented to such disclosure.
 - c. The provisions of this section shall not prohibit any communications between Peer Support Specialist Team members who conduct peer support counseling sessions or any

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communications between Peer Support Specialist Team members and the supervisors or staff of an employee assistance program.

- d. The provisions of this section shall not prohibit communications regarding fitness of an employee for duty between an employee assistance program and employer.

Contact Guidelines

- 1) Contact by a Team member cannot be forced upon a Police Division member.
 - a. No order will be given by a superior for a Police Division member to contact a Peer Support Specialist.
 - b. Contacting a Team member will not be a condition of a performance improvement plan.
 - c. Contact with a Team member will not be a condition of disciplinary action.
- 2) Interaction with a Team member acting as a Peer Support Specialist role requires expressed consent by the Police Division member.
- 3) Team members may initiate contact with Police Division members on good faith for high-profile incidents or requests by a third party.
 - a. The contact will consist of providing Police Division member contact information of Team members only.
 - b. The Team will never release any information about an unsolicited contact. All inquiries will be addressed by stating that Police Division member was given the means to contact the Team if the Police Division member chooses.
- 4) Peer Support Specialist Team contact information will be provided to all Police Division members who:
 - a. Sustain an on-the-job injury.
 - b. Request FMLA.
 - c. Are involved in an internal investigation.
 - d. Are placed on administrative leave.
- 5) Peer Support Specialist Team members who believe an on-duty Police Division member is a hazard to themselves or others will immediately contact a Clinical Consultant and the Commander of CIT/Employee Wellness Unit, or their designee, to request the Police Division member be removed from operational status.
- 6) Commanders should consider activating the Peer Support Specialist Team for any incident involving, but not limited to:
 - a. Traumatic events involving children.
 - b. Mass casualty incidents.
 - c. Significant incidents involving Police Division members or immediate families.
 - d. Any unusual incident with a powerful impact.
- 7) Police Division members or their immediate family may initiate contact with a Peer Support Specialist at any time. Contact information for the Team will be available in the Cordico Wellness app.
- 8) St. Louis County Officers may initiate contact with the SLMPD Peer Support Specialist Team. Contact information will be stored in the Cordico Wellness App.
- 9) Commanders may activate the Team by notifying RTCC or the Commander CIT/Employee Wellness.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Team members will be volunteer Police Division members who meet the established criteria listed below.
 - a. Be employed for a minimum of 3 years.
 - b. Display emotional maturity.

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- c. Be respected and trusted among their peers.
- d. Be sensitive to others / empathetic.
- e. CIT trained preferred.
- f. Officers should have an interest in helping their fellow Police Division members in times of need.
- g. Have an interest in learning about psycho-social processes.
- h. Will adhere to established limits and criteria.
- i. Agree to maintain confidentiality within the guidelines established in HB1355 and within this policy.
- j. Attend and successfully complete specialized training.
- k. Pass a structured oral interview.
- l. Willingness to be on call and respond to critical incidents if needed.
- m. Officers may be of any rank.
- n. Open to any Police Division member.

Confidentiality

The Peer Support Specialist Team is a confidential program aside from those provisions outlined in HB1355. It is imperative to the function of the Team that a strong presence of trust is established and maintained amid those who would seek Team services. Understanding of the Team's confidentiality policies by the Police Division, the clinical consultants and all Team members is required.

- 1) No identifying records of Police Division members who utilize the Team will be maintained.
- 2) Team members will not discuss information obtained while acting in the capacity of a peer support specialist without the consent of the Police Division member, with anyone beyond the clinical consultant, other mental health professional, or Team member for the purpose of mental health support unless otherwise required by law (HB1355).
- 3) Team members will not divulge shared information with other Police Division members of any rank, family, friends, or the general public.
- 4) Team members will not be found insubordinate or otherwise in violation of city and/or Police Division policy for failure to release or share information about an Police Division member under internal investigation, obtained as a Peer Support Specialist Team member, or acting in an official capacity, unless required by law (HB1355).
- 5) Police Division members will be advised that confidentiality will be maintained except as required in the following circumstances (BH1355):
 - a. The Police Division member discloses information that leads the Team member to believe the Police Division member is an imminent threat to self or others.
 - b. The Police Division member discloses information about a suspected or alleged child abuse or elder abuse.
 - c. The Police Division member discloses information involving legal issues that impact employment.
 - d. Any other instances required by law.

Social Media

Due to the high visibility and inherent nature of social media, it is vital that Team members maintain an image of leadership and confidentiality. Any breach, or perceived breach, of the Peer Support Specialist Team's ability to lead or maintain confidentiality would be injurious to the peer support mission. Therefore,

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and in accordance with the Police Division's Social Media Policy S.O. XXX, Peer Support Specialist Team members will adhere to the following rules regarding social media:

- 1) All Peer Support Specialist Team members will refrain from any and all social media regarding an incident if any Peer Support Specialist is operating in the capacity as a Peer at the scene.
- 2) Peer Support Specialist Team members will not participate in social media for twenty-four (24) hours post official release of an incident involving any public safety agency.
- 3) Peer Support Specialist Team members will refrain from making derogatory comments towards the Police Division or any Team member.
- 4) Peer Support Specialist Team members will abide by Police Division S.O. XXXX.