

Personnel

Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program MODEL POLICY

Effective Date	Policy Number	
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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this Order is to establish written policy within the Department concerning the functions and responsibilities of the Employee Wellness and Peer Support, the Critical Investigation Stress Reduction Program, and the Critical Incident Stress Management Program.

The Department recognizes that personnel, in the course of their assigned duties, may encounter incidents that result in varying degrees of emotional and psychological trauma. Unaddressed, the cumulative effects of this critical incident stress can lead to serious problems which may affect the ability of personnel to function in a well-adjusted, productive manner.

By understanding the effects of critical incident stress and employing the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) procedures defined in this Order, Commanders and supervisors, working closely with the Peer Support Coordinator, will take an active part in facilitating the adjustment and recovery of personnel after a critical incident.

A DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Post-Traumatic Stress Condition – An anxiety condition that can result from exposure to a traumatic event and is diagnosed as such if symptoms persist after 30 days.

Acute Stress Condition – An anxiety condition that can result from exposure to a traumatic event and occurs within 30 days of exposure.

Critical Incident – Any situation faced by personnel in the course of their employment with the Department or by department members while taking police action on or off duty that causes them to experience unusually strong, negative emotional reactions after the event. While these reactions are normal physiological responses to traumatic events, they have the potential to interfere with the individual's ability to function in a well-adjusted, productive manner.

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Critical incidents can include, but are not limited to, incidents which involve:

- The use of deadly force either by or against personnel.
- The line-of-duty death or injury of personnel.
- A terrible disaster or accident, especially one that leads to great loss of life (catastrophe or mass disaster).
- Life threatening injury or death to a child.

Critical Incident Management – A process involving defusing's and debriefings which are based on crisis intervention theory and educational intervention theory. This process is designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event, thus preventing the subsequent development of post-traumatic stress condition. In addition, the CISD serves as an early identification mechanism for individuals who may require additional assistance subsequent to the traumatic event.

Critical Incident Stress Defusing – A confidential group or one-on-one initial discussion between affected personnel and a Peer Support Team member occurring shortly after the critical incident is stabilized. The Peer Support Coordinator and on-scene Watch Commander will coordinate the procedures for a defusing briefing prior to personnel securing from the scene or as soon as practical following the incident.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings - A confidential group or one-on-one meeting between affected personnel and a Peer Support Team member or member of the CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) Team. Debriefings are ***scheduled at a time after the event is resolved***. Peer Support and/or CISM will be present to facilitate the discussion and assist the CISM Coordinator with personnel interested in preventing post-event development of stress.

Employee Wellness and Peer Support Team Members (EWPS Team Members) – A formal group of individuals consisting of department personnel or regional personnel who have undergone training in Employee Wellness and Peer Support methods.

Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Board (EWPS Program Board) – An internal board, comprised of the Department Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator (EWPS Program Coordinator), The City Human Resources representative, Department chaplains and a one sworn peer support representative along with one civilian peer support representative who are responsible for management of the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program within the Department. This Board will additionally forward recommendations for peer support officers to the Chief of Police for approval.

Reasonably Mandatory – This refers specifically and only to the collaborated decision between the affected employee's watch/bureau commander and the Peer Support Coordinator as to whether an affected employee should be allowed to forgo the attendance at either the CISD Debrief or Defusing.

Qualified Mental Health Professional – An individual who is licensed as a mental health professional and has an in-depth understanding of the law enforcement culture.

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Regional Wellness and Peer Support Council – The Eastern Missouri Peer Support Council which is a regional council, comprised of region representatives from Law Enforcement and Mental Health/Critical Incident Management within the region. This council is responsible for vetting candidates to operate on the regional team as peer support officers, counselors or other assigned positions needed for peer support throughout the region.

POLICY

The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program will provide all Department personnel who are attempting to cope with stress related problems or those who have experienced critical incident stress with the assistance necessary for them to return to or maintain an effective level of functionality in both their professional and personal lives. A strict policy of confidentiality will be maintained regarding the identity and/or issues related to program utilization in compliance with RSMo. 590.1040.

GENERAL

The Department recognizes that its personnel, in the course of their assigned duties may encounter incidents that result in varying degrees of psychological and emotional trauma. If left unattended critical incident stress can lead to problems for employees, which may affect their ability to function in a productive manner. By understanding the effects of critical incident stress, and by employing procedures outlined in this Order, commanders and supervisors will take an active role in ensuring the well-being of Department personnel who participate in critical incidents by providing confidential defusing and debriefing for affected personnel.

A SELECTION OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS TEAM MEMBERS

The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program shall be managed by the Department EWPS Program Coordinator (EWPS Program Coordinator) who will be appointed by the Chief of Police.

- (a) Participation as a peer support team member shall be voluntary.
- (b) EWPS Team Members shall be non-probationary employees with no less than two years of police experience (at least one with this Department).
- (c) The EWPS Program Coordinator and appropriate members of the EWPS Program Board shall review selection process memorandums for the following characteristics:
 - 1. Ability to maintain confidential information
 - 2. Interpersonal skills with an emphases on listening skills
 - 3. Peer credibility based on, but not limited to, the following:
 - i. Experience
 - ii. Ability to relate to or appreciate the stress the employee is experiencing
- (d) Upon receipt of a sufficient number of selection process memorandums and depending on the needs of the Department, there shall be a selection process wherein the candidates are recommended by their supervisors and the EWPS Program Coordinator who will forward those to the Chief of Police for approval. The Chief of Police will approve and forward recommendations to the Regional

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Wellness and Peer Support Council.

- (e) Those candidates who are selected to participate in the program shall be required to complete a standardized course of training approved by the Regional Employee Wellness and Peer Support Council.

B PROCEDURE

Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program

(a) Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Contacts

1. A roster of all Department and Regional Peer Support Program Contacts shall be posted in the squad room and in dispatch.
2. Department personnel may initiate contact with any Regional Peer Support Team Member when they feel they need support regarding professional and/or personal issues that may have an effect on his/her quality of life or job performance.
3. The decision to engage in the Employee Wellness/Peer Support Program ultimately lies with the affected person and not the team member or the Department.

(b) Shift Commanders or Supervisors shall request assistance from the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program in the following circumstances:

1. Any police involved shooting
2. On duty death or serious injury of Department personnel. It is the Department's policy to provide assistance and support to the family and coworkers of any personnel who are killed, die, or are seriously injured in the line-or-duty. This assistance will be provided whether the death or injury was the result of a criminal act, accident, natural causes, or self-inflicted, while the individual was either on duty or performing a work related function off duty.

The Department will provide support, as well as a clarification of comprehensive survivor benefits, if applicable, during this period of adjustment for the affected personnel, family, significant others, and coworkers.

The EWPS Program Coordinator shall coordinate all levels of assistance in response to a line-of-duty incident.

Note: No Employee Wellness Team Member(s) who were in anyway involved in the incident shall be selected to act in their Employee Wellness/Peer Support capacity for the same incident, unless extraordinary circumstances exist and approved by the Chief of Police.

Employees may receive on-scene medical assessment/treatment at the discretion of the on-scene shift commander or supervisor following these

critical incidents:

- i. Suicide, serious injury, or death of Department personnel.
- ii. Suicide, death, or serious injury/illness of any Department personnel's family member or significant other.
- iii. The Death of or serious injury inflicted upon a civilian as the result of police operations to include, but not limited to, Department motor vehicle accidents or the use of deadly force.
- iv. Mass casualty/injury incidents.
- v. Incidents where Department personnel experienced the immediate after-effects of the death or serious injury of a child.

The Department's EWPS Program Coordinator shall be contacted by the shift commander, supervisor or bureau commander at which time the coordinator will carry out all responses outlined in this section.

- (c) A critical incident stress management debrief shall be coordinated at the discretion of the EWPS Program Coordinator with the consent of the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

FEDERAL ACTIVATION OR NATIONAL DISASTER PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR (NDMS)

The appropriate Bureau Commander or the Assistant Chief of Police shall notify the Employee Wellness Program Coordinator whenever an employee is preparing for a federal activation that is expected to exceed 90 days; this procedure will be followed for both personnel serving in the military or the National Disaster Medical System.

- (d) The EWPS Program Coordinator will assign an EWPS Team Member, preferably one who has experienced a military deployment, who will maintain contact with the employee during the pre-activation, activation, and returning phases.
- (e) The EWPS Team Member will contact the employee and his/her family members monthly (or as needed) and offer assistance/support throughout the period of activation.
- (f) The EWPS Program Coordinator and the assigned EWPS Team Member will meet with the employee upon his/her return and offer assistance/support to cover areas of concern.
- (g) Prior to the employee's returning to full duty the EWPS Program Coordinator shall meet with the employee and assure they are comfortable with returning to duty. Based on the employee's readiness to return, Departmental guidelines related to the particular issue will be followed if the employee advises they are not ready to return.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is essential to promoting trust and anonymity between Employee Wellness Team Members and individuals requesting assistance. It is critical to protect the identity of Department Personnel and the content of their contact with team members. EWPS Team

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Members are not licensed counselors or therapists, but act as peer support, providing/offering information and the opportunity to obtain information and direction to resolve concerns in a confidential setting.

A GUIDELINES

- (a) The interaction between an EWPS Team Member and any Department personnel is a relationship that is considered confidential by the Department in order to ensure trust, anonymity, and effectiveness of any assistance requested. While reasonable effort to protect anonymity shall be taken by the team member, and the program coordinator, there are confidentiality exceptions to this policy.
- (b) No EWPS Team Member will be required to release the contents of his/her confidential conversations with any Department personnel. No commander or supervisor shall be able to order the disclosure of the information, unless the exceptions outlined in the following sections are met. The Department agrees that in order for this program to be successful, a peer support team member will not be classified as a witness during any Bureau of Professional Standards' internal investigation based solely on their incident involvement as an EWPS Team Member.

Additionally, an EWPS Team member will not be ordered to disclose any information gained in his/her role as a peer support team member during a Bureau of Professional Standards' internal investigation, subject to the any exceptions outlined in this policy in the below section 10.34.5B.

- (c) In order for the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program to be effective, employees must believe their statements are confidential, but not privileged. Therefore, all EWPS Team Members are responsible for keeping the confidence of their fellow employees by not discussing the statements or other information in any way that could be used to identify a specific employee. EWPS Team Members must only speak for themselves and not for others in the Department. No EWPS Team Member will discuss private conversations or confidential information with other Peer Support Team Members, other than the EWPS Program Coordinator or his/her designee.
 - 1. No EWPS Team Member shall take or maintain written notes of any conversations.
 - 2. No EWPS Team Member is authorized to record any conversations related to the Employee Wellness Program.
 - 3. Any questioning about the actions of those involved in the incident by EWPS Team Members is prohibited.

Note: Any EWPS Team Member who knowingly violates these guidelines may be subject to disciplinary actions.

B EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

The rights and privacy of employees will be protected to the maximum extent possible, while still maintaining a balance with the Department's duty to maintain a safe and productive workplace and work force. At the onset of each contact by an EWPS Team Member with an employee seeking assistance, the Team Member is required to tell the employee there are some situations where confidentiality cannot be absolute. While every effort will be made to protect anonymity,

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the gravity of some situations will demand attention by the Department's Command Staff. Team Members will be instructed that confidentiality will be maintained in all but the following circumstances:

- (a) When the circumstances indicate the employee being assisted is a danger to themselves or others; and/or
- (b) When child/elder abuse is suspected, alleged, or apparent; and/or
- (c) When there are indications of domestic Violence; and/or
- (d) When there is a disclosure of a serious crime.
- (e) Under other mandated reporter situations.

C BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY PROCEDURES

- (a) Non-emergency situations: Whenever an EWPS Team Member believes a confidentiality exception is present, the Team Member will, as soon as possible, contact the Employee Wellness Program Coordinator or his/her designee and discuss the general circumstances of the situation without utilizing names of the affected employee. If, in the judgment of the program coordinator immediate attention is required, the Team Member will disclose all relevant information about the situation including the identity of the employee or individual(s) involved. Pursuant to his/her legal obligations, the program coordinator will immediately notify the Chief of Police or his designee. Department EAP or CIT procedures will be followed in these situations.
- (b) Emergency Procedures: Whenever an EWPS Team Member becomes aware of a critical issue involving imminent risk of physical harm to an employee or others, that Team Member shall immediately make all necessary notification to stabilize the situation and assure the safety of everyone involved. As soon as it is practical and safe to do so, the Team Member will make appropriate notifications starting with the employee's watch commander or an on duty supervisor in the affected precinct or bureau of the employee. The Employee Wellness Team Member will then contact the EWPS Program Coordinator and or his/her designee as soon as practical. Department EAP or CIT procedures will be followed in these situations.

D CRITICAL INVESTIGATION STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM (CISR)

- (a) This program is mandatory as dictated by RSMo. 590.192 the Critical Incident Stress Management Program. The EWPS Program Coordinator shall facilitate and maintain compliance with this program.

E CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM)

- (a) It is the policy of the Department to respond to critical incidents by providing confidential defusing's and debriefings to affected personnel utilizing the procedures outlined in this policy.
- (b) Any and all discussion between the participating affected personnel, designated Peer Support personnel, CISM personnel, chaplains and supervisors will be held to the strictest of confidence and subject to the guidelines of this order above and other policies regarding disciplinary procedures.
- (c) The Supervisor of the affected employee(s) shall immediately contact the EWPS Coordinator and the Assistant Chief of Police, who will make the determination if a defusing is immediately (within 8 hours of critical incident) needed. Consultation

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with a Critical Incident Stress Organization may be utilized to make this determination.

1. If, based on the facts and feedback of the on-scene supervisor, a defusing is recommended the EWPS Coordinator will respond to the scene or will assign a CISM trained department employee to respond to the scene to conduct the defusing.
 2. If a defusing is NOT recommended, the EWPS Coordinator will determine if a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) is recommended. (A CISD is conducted within 96 hours, but 24 hours after, the conclusion of the critical incident.) The decision to provide a debriefing relies heavily on advisement from the on-scene supervisor and the circumstances of the Critical Incident.
- (d) The Peer Support Coordinator will make the determination based on CISM training what affected personnel should be required to attend a CISD debrief or defusing.
- (e) The attendance of personnel at a CISD debriefing or defusing will be reasonably mandatory based on the collaborated discussion with the shift commander and/or bureau commander of the affected employee and the EWPS Coordinator.
- (f) Whether occurring on or off duty, the employee must notify their immediate shift commander that they are attending the briefing.

F. Mental Health Check-In

(a). Per RSMo. 590.192, a mental health check-in is required by all officers every 3-5 years. Therefore, a peer support officer will conduct roll call training at least every other year in order to educate officers on the ongoing peer support program and to encourage and solicit open dialogue and conversation about mental wellness and wellbeing.

(b). The Peer Support Officer conducting the roll call training/brief will document the mental health check-in on the Mental Wellness Check-In form as well as an attached sign-in sheet which will be retained by the Professional Standards Commander.

See Attached Forms.