

DEPARTMENTAL GENERAL ORDER 17-112

ST. LOUIS COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

August 16, 2017

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Peer Support  
Critical Investigation Stress Reduction (CISR)  
Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

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Cancels:

**EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

**I. PURPOSE**

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.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to a traumatic event and is diagnosed as such if symptoms persist after 30 days.
- B. Acute Stress Disorder – An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to a traumatic event and occurs within 30 days of exposure.
- C. 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.

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

- 1. The use of deadly force either by or against personnel.
  - 2. The line-of-duty death or injury of personnel.
  - 3. A terrible disaster or accident, especially one that leads to great loss of life (catastrophe or mass disaster).
  - 4. Life threatening injury or death to a child.
- D. Critical Incident Management – A process involving defusings 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 disorder. In addition, the CISD serves as an early identification mechanism for individuals who may require additional assistance subsequent to the traumatic event.

- E. **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.
- F. **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.
- G. **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.
- H. **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.
- I. **Employee Wellness Team Members** – A formal group of individuals consisting of Department personnel who have undergone training in Employee Wellness and Peer Support methods.
- J. **Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Council** – A council, comprised of the Employee Wellness Program Coordinator, Department employees, Department chaplains, and mental health/ critical incident management advocates, responsible for training and policy concerning the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program.

### III. **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.

### IV. **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.

**V. SELECTION OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS TEAM MEMBERS**

- A. The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program shall be administered by the Department Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator who will be appointed by the Chief of Police.**
- B. Participation as a team member shall be voluntary.**
- C. Employee Wellness team members shall be non-probationary employees with no less than two years of police experience (at least one with this Department).**
- D. The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator and appropriate members of the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Council shall review selection process memorandums for the following characteristics:**
  - A. Ability to maintain confidential information**
  - B. Interpersonal skills with an emphases on listening skills**
  - C. Peer credibility based on, but not limited to, the following:**
    - 1. Experience**
    - 2. Ability to relate to or appreciate the stress the employee is experiencing**
- E. 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 vetted by the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Council.**
- F. Those candidates who are selected to participate in the program shall be required to complete a standardized course of training approved by the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator and the Director of the St. Louis County and Municipal Police Academy.**

**VI. PROCEDURE**

- A. Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program**
  - A. Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Contacts**
    - 1. A roster of all Department personnel shall be posted on bulletin boards in each precinct, bureau, and division.**
    - 2. Department personnel may initiate contact with any Employee Wellness 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 Program ultimately lies with the affected person and not the team member or the Department.**
  - B. Watch/Bureau commander shall request assistance from the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program in the following circumstances:**
    - a. Any police involved shooting**
    - b. 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 Employee Wellness and Peer Support 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 capacity for the same incident.

Employees may receive on-scene medical assessment/treatment at the discretion of the on-scene watch/bureau commander following these critical incidents:

- a. Suicide, serious injury, or death of Department personnel.
- b. Suicide, death, or serious injury/illness of any Department personnel's family member or significant other.
- c. 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.
- d. Mass casualty/injury incidents.
- e. Incidents where Department personnel experienced the immediate after effects of the death or serious injury of a child.

The Department's Employee Wellness Program Coordinator shall be contacted by the watch commander or bureau commander at which time the coordinator will carry out all responses outlined in this section. The Bureau of Communications shall maintain the necessary contact information for the Employee Wellness Program Coordinator.

- C. A critical incident stress management debrief shall be coordinated at the discretion of the Employee Wellness Coordinator.

## **VII. Federal Activation or National Disaster Program Administrator (NDMS)**

- A. The Staff Services Program Administrator 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.
  1. The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator will assign an Employee Wellness 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.

2. The Employee Wellness Team Member will contact the employee and his/her family members monthly (or as needed) and offer assistance/support throughout the period of activation.
3. The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator and the assigned Employee Wellness Team Member will meet with the employee upon his/her return and offer assistance/support to cover areas of concern.
4. Prior to the employee's returning to full duty the Employee Wellness and Peer Support 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 there are not ready to return.

### **VIII. Confidentiality**

A. 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. Employee Wellness Team 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.

#### **1. Guidelines**

- a. The interaction between an Employee Wellness 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 Employee Wellness 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 team member will not be classified as a witness during any Bureau of Professional Standards' investigation based solely on their incident involvement as an Employee Wellness Team Member.

Additionally, an Employee Wellness Team member will not be ordered to disclose any information gained in his/her role as a team member during a Bureau of Professional Standards' investigation, subject to the exceptions outlined in section VIII.B.6.

- 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 Employee Wellness 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. Team members must only speak for themselves and not for others in the Department. No Employee Wellness Team Member will discuss private conversations or confidential information with other Team Members, other than the Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator or his/her designee.

- d. No Employee Wellness Team Member shall take or maintain written notes of any conversations.
- e. No Employee Wellness Team Member is authorized to record any conversations related to the Employee Wellness Program.
- f. Any questioning about the actions of those involved in the incident by Wellness Team Members is prohibited.

Note: any Employee Wellness Team Member who knowingly violates these guidelines will be subject to Departmental discipline under Article 19.1 of the Conduct and Discipline Manual.

#### 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 Employee Wellness 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, 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

1. **Non-emergency situations:** Whenever an Employee Wellness 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.

2. **Emergency Procedures:** Whenever an Employee Wellness 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 Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator and or his/her designee as soon as practical. Department EAP or CIT procedures will be followed in these situations.

**IX. Critical Investigation Stress Reduction Program (CISR)**

- A. This program is mandatory for police officers, professional staff and supervisors assigned to the following units:
  1. Crime Scene Unit
  2. Digital Forensics Unit
  3. Special Investigations
  4. Child Abuse Unit
  5. Robbery/Homicide/Sexual Assault
- B. An Employee Assistance Program Counselor will establish an open appointment once a week, 52 weeks a year.
  1. The supervisors of the designated units shall collaborate and fill the appointments with personnel from their units on a rotational basis.
    - a. At a minimum each effected employee will attend one appointment per year.
    - b. Some employees will attend more than one appointment per year to assure this resource is utilized to its full potential.
    - c. Any missed appointments shall be rescheduled.
- C. There will be two group meetings, held at an off-site location, per year involving an appropriate number of employees from the designated units.

Each employee in the designated units shall attend at least one group meeting per year.

- D. Employees shall have the option of visiting a different counselor, if requested, based on their preferences.

The Employee Wellness and Peer Support Program Coordinator shall facilitate and maintain the Critical Investigation Stress Reduction Program.

**X. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)**

- A. It is the policy of the Department to respond to critical incidents by providing confidential defusings 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 Section VIII of this order above and Article 19.1 of the Conduct and Discipline Manual.**
- C. The Commanding Officer of the affected employee(s) shall immediately contact the Peer Support Coordinator or designee, via Bureau of Communications who will make the determination if a defusing is immediately (within 8 hours of critical incident) needed.**
  - a. If, based on the facts and feedback of the on-scene supervisor, a defusing is recommended the Peer Support Coordinator will respond to the scene or will assign a CISM trained department employee to respond to the scene to conduct the defusing.**
  - b. If a defusing is NOT recommended, the Peer Support 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 watch/bureau commander of the affected employee and the peer support coordinator.**
- F. Whether occurring on or off duty, the employee must notify their immediate watch/bureau commander that they are attending the briefing.**



**Adopted by Command Staff**

**By order of:**

**COLONEL JON M. BELMAR**  
**Chief of Police**

**JB:km**

**Approved at the regular Board of Police Commissioners meeting of August 16, 2017.**

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**MR. ROLAND J. CORVINGTON**  
**COMMISSIONER**  
**Chairman**

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**MS. LAURIE L. WESTFALL**  
**COMMISSIONER**  
**Secretary**

**Distribution**  
**All Department Personnel**

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