



**The
Personnel
Process**

Number: 04-12-01
Subject: Peer Support Program
Effective Date: March 15, 2019

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a Peer Support Program through which agency employees may receive confidential support and/or guidance during incidents of personal or professional crisis. The Peer Support Program offers trained but non-credentialed, peer support personnel to assist agency employees as an adjunct to the Employee Assistance Program.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Nebraska State Patrol to allow non-professional emotional and/or tangible support and assistance to employees during times of personal or professional crisis. Peer support personnel may assist other employees and their families through informal counseling and support, and through referral to the Employee Assistance Program or other professional services. Employees and/or their families may, at any time, voluntarily seek the assistance of a peer support employee without supervisory approval.

III. Definitions

A. Program Psychologist

The Peer Support Program Psychologist will be a person whose background and practice includes extensive experience with law enforcement officers and the unique problems associated with the law enforcement profession. The psychologist will:

1. Serve as an advisor to the Peer Support Program;
2. Provide training or instruction to peer supporters;
3. Attend quarterly training meetings.

B. Peer Support Coordinator will be the functional head of the program. The duties of the coordinator are:

1. Act as the primary liaison between peer supporters, the Peer

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Support Advisory Committee, resource persons and programs and the agency.

2. Report to the Director of Training on issues, concerns, training needs and any other business pertaining to the operation of the Peer Support Program.
3. Manage the Peer Support Program and coordinate training for peer supporters.
4. Maintain and distribute support personnel available and current contact information.
5. Provide guidance to the peer support team and members as needed.
6. Develop and deploy resources to assist employees.
7. Maintain general data regarding contacts made by peer supporters.
8. Provide an annual overview of the programs activities to Command Staff.

C. Advisory Committee

The Peer Support Advisory Committee shall oversee the Program and will consist of the following personnel:

1. Assistant Superintendent
2. Director of Training
3. Command Chaplain
4. Peer Support Coordinator

IV. Confidentiality

- A. Strict confidentiality shall be maintained between the peer supporter and the employee in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
- B. Peer Supporters will inform the person prior to any discussion of the programs confidentiality limitations and exceptions. Peer supporters should consult with the Peer Support Coordinator or psychologist about questions that arise regarding confidentiality.
- C. Information divulged to a peer supporter concerning the following matters are NOT held confidential:
 1. Danger to self / threats of suicide;
 2. Danger to others / felonious assault;
 3. Significant chemical dependency concern;
 4. Mental health concerns that are beyond the scope and training of the peer support program;

5. Significant violations of agency policy;
6. Suspected child abuse / mistreatment;
7. Drug offenses, sales / transport;
8. Domestic violence;
9. Cases in which the law requires divulgence;
10. When the peer requests divulgence.

- D. Peer support team members who report any non-confidential matter shall not serve in the conduct of any investigation arising from any allegation.
- E. In the event of internal investigation, the peer support role should be one of support and assistance for the employee experiencing the stress of an internal investigation.
- F. A peer supporter should not volunteer information received in confidence, hinder or impede an investigation, or attempt to shelter the employee from an investigation.
- G. Violations of confidentiality will result in removal of the affected peer support member from the Peer Support Program and may include disciplinary procedures as outlined by policy 03-11.

V. Referral

- A. An employee may contact any peer support team member at any time, whether on or off duty, to request assistance or support.
- B. Supervisors may request a peer support team member to contact an employee when a crisis or situation has been identified in which the employee might benefit from the program.
- C. Employees are not required to utilize or accept offers of assistance from any member of the Peer Support Program.

VI. Notification

The program coordinator shall be notified in the event of the following incidents:

1. Death of an employee of the Agency;
2. Serious injury or harm to an employee of the Agency;
3. Any incident where the employee was injured, has discharged, or used a weapon in defense of themselves or others;
4. Any incident resulting in death of suspect or bystander;
5. Serious illness or injury of an employee (with permission of the employee and compliance with HIPPA guidelines);
6. Fatality accidents / crashes investigated by the agency;

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7. Significant crash / crime events requiring multiple officer response;
8. Any event, which required lifesaving efforts.

VII. Peer Support Team Member Duties / Responsibilities

- A. Provide support and assistance on a voluntary basis to fellow employees and/or their families in times of personal and/or professional crises;
- B. Convey trust, anonymity and assure confidentiality within policy to employees who seek assistance from the Peer Support Program;
- C. Assist employees by referral to the appropriate resource when necessary;
- D. Be available for additional follow up support;
- E. Be available to be contacted and if practical to respond at any hour;
- F. Attend quarterly peer support training;
- G. Refrain from entering into relationships which may reasonably be expected to impair objectivity, competence, or effectiveness of their peer support role, or otherwise risk exploitation or harm to the person with whom the relationship exists.

VIII. Selection

- A. Any interested employee may volunteer to serve as a peer support team member through request to the Peer Support Coordinator.
- B. Applicants must:
 1. Have no work restrictions involving psychological stress.
 2. Not be the subject of an investigation or pending disciplinary action.
 3. Be endorsed by their commander.
 4. Agree to maintain the confidentiality guidelines established within this policy.
 5. Be recognized for possessing the qualities of empathy, interpersonal and communication skills.
 6. Review of application and approval by the Peer Support Advisory Committee.
 7. Consideration may be given to employees having a resolved traumatic or disciplinary experience, years of service, training, present or previous assignment and geographic location.
- C. The Peer Support Advisory Committee will select those appointed as Peer Support members with final approval of the Superintendent.

IX. Resignation and Removal

- A. Peer support members may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time by providing written notification of their intent to the program coordinator.
- B. The Advisory Committee may remove peer support team members from the program at any time for:
 - 1. Breach of confidentiality and/or conduct inconsistent with the program or agency policy;
 - 2. Failure to fulfill training requirements and/or attend regular training or;
 - 3. Unsatisfactory work performance.

X. General Rules Provisions

- A. Participation in the Peer Support program is strictly voluntary. With approval, overtime and/or compensatory time may be authorized for time expended by employees utilizing the program or by personnel performing peer support functions.
- B. Peer Support Team members may consult with employees while on duty upon notification of their immediate supervisor.
- C. Within policy, Patrol vehicles and facilities may be used in conjunction with peer support activities.

XII. Training

- A. Peer Support Team members must complete a basic training program as determined by the coordinator and advisory committee.
- B. The training will focus on:
 - 1. Effective listening
 - 2. General assessment skills
 - 3. Problem solving skills
 - 4. Relationship termination (divorce, death, etc.)
 - 5. Referral and follow up
 - 6. Stress management
 - 7. Peer supporters must also successfully complete the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation basic 16 hour debrief training.