

**STOCKTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**GENERAL ORDER**

**PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**  
**SUBJECT**

**DATE:** April 19, 2019

**NO:** K-4

**FROM:** CHIEF ERIC JONES

**TO:** ALL PERSONNEL

**INDEX:** Peer Support  
Critical Incident Support  
Employee Personnel Problems

**I. POLICY**

The Department shall offer the Peer Support Program to employees.

**II. PURPOSE**

To help Department employees through a critical incident, reducing the likelihood or effects of post-trauma stress reactions, and to provide support and assistance to employees and their families in handling personal problems. The Peer Support program is one part of the larger Stockton Police Wellness Network.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. WELLNESS NETWORK: Support network consisting of the Peer Support Program, contracted police psychologist, Chaplaincy Program and City of Stockton Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that recognizes the importance of a preventative and holistic approach to employee wellness by building resiliency through family and emotional support, exercise and diet, and faith.
- B. TRAUMATIC INCIDENT: Any situation that is likely to be emotionally overwhelming to a Department employee.
- C. CRITICAL INCIDENT: A traumatic incident that is work related.
- D. PEER SUPPORT: A process whereby a person discusses a personal issue with a nonprofessional, usually a friend or coworker. The person defines a problem and decides upon a solution himself/herself. The peer support member utilizes effective active listening skills, helps clarify issues, and supports the person through their problem-solving process.

**IV. PROCEDURES**

- A. ORGANIZATION:
  - 1. The Chief of Police will appoint a member from the Stockton Police Department to act as the Program Manager.
  - 2. The Peer Support Program is committed to selecting peer support members with varied ethnic, cultural, and life experiences.
  - 3. An updated listing of city and countywide available community and related resources (such as psychologists, counselors, etc.) shall be maintained.

**V. PARTICIPATION**

- A. Peer Support members will consist of the following personnel:
  - 1. Sworn personnel.

2. Civilian personnel.
- B. Peer Support members may also be supported and assisted by the following personnel.
1. A Department member's union representative (such as SPOA, SCEA, SPMA, etc.)
  2. A police chaplaincy representative.
  3. Selected psychologists.
  4. Subject matter speakers (e.g., Critical Incident).

**VI. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- A. The most important aspect of the Peer Support Program is the promotion of trust, anonymity, and confidentiality. Therefore, communications between Peer Support personnel and employees involved in traumatic incidents shall be confidential, with the following exceptions:
1. There is child abuse involved.
  2. There is reason to believe the employee intends to hurt himself/herself or another person.
  3. The employee is involved in any crime.
  4. At the discretion of the Peer Support member, where, due to substance abuse or other reasons, the employee is a clear and present danger to self, citizens, or fellow employees.
    - (a) If any of the above conditions exist, the Peer Support Program Manager shall be notified. In the case of threatened injury, the intended victim shall also be notified.
  5. Situations related to sexual harassment and/or EEO violations.
- B. These exceptions to confidentiality are either required by law or are necessary. Employees who become Peer Support members cannot abdicate their responsibilities to report criminal conduct as is defined in this section. If concerns arise, Peer Support members shall contact the Program Manager for guidance.
- C. Confidentiality, as it applies to this program, is not protected by statute; it is protected as a matter of Stockton Police Department policy.

**VII. SELECTION CRITERIA**

- A. Employees interested in participating in the Peer Support Program shall submit an application via memorandum of interest to the Peer Support Program Manager.
1. A review committee, comprised of, as a minimum, one non-sworn Peer Support member, one sworn Peer Support member, one Peer Support supervisor, the Senior Chaplain, and the contracted police psychologist, will review the submitted applications. Selected applicants will be invited to participate in an interview.
  2. Selections shall be made by the Program Manager.
  3. For selection to participate in the program, employees shall meet the following criteria:
    - a. Minimum 18 months of service with the Stockton Police Department.
    - b. Shall attend regularly-scheduled meetings and training sessions.
    - c. Shall sign a confidentiality agreement regarding peer support matters.
    - d. Commit to serving a minimum of three years in the program.

- e. Demonstrate above-average active listening skills.
- f. Agree to submit a short biography regarding personal challenges that qualify the employee to be a member of the team.

**VIII. DESELECTION CRITERIA**

- A. Deselection from the program shall be made by the Peer Support Program Manager. Deselection will be made based on the following criteria:
  - 1. Breach of confidentiality.
  - 2. Lack of participation.
  - 3. Inability to participate due to professional and/or personal reasons.
  - 4. Ineffectiveness as determined by the Program Manager.

**IX. TRAINING**

- A. Initial training shall consist of 24 hours of peer support and critical incident instruction. Topics will include the following:
  - 1. Crisis recognition
  - 2. Crisis intervention and counseling
  - 3. Listening skills
  - 4. Assessment skills
  - 5. Substance abuse identification
  - 6. Departmental policies and procedures
  - 7. Defusing and debriefing techniques
  - 8. Sexual Harassment (Federal law mandates that supervisors take action on reported incidents.)

**X. PEER SUPPORT FUNCTIONS**

- A. To provide emotional support to employees who express a need for assistance.
- B. To promote trust, appropriate anonymity, and confidentiality for employees participating in peer support.
- C. To develop employee's ability to anticipate personal conflicts and an awareness of available alternatives for self help.
- D. To provide support to personnel off duty due to injury or illness.
- E. To identify quality service providers in the community and surrounding area who can be used as counseling referrals.
- F. In most cases, peer support will take the form of on-duty meetings of relatively short duration; however, overtime may be authorized should a peer support member feel it is necessary to submit for it. Overtime requests shall be submitted through the Peer Support Program Manager for approval.

## **XI. CRITICAL INCIDENT FUNCTIONS**

- A. To reduce the likelihood of serious post-trauma stress reactions, the following procedures shall be adhered to:
1. In any incident where non-physical trauma can be expected, the Peer Support Program Manager or designee will be notified.
    - a. Peer Support personnel on duty, or a specifically requested peer support member during an incident, shall be called to the scene immediately.
    - b. The Peer Support Program Manager or Peer Support member at the scene shall evaluate the situation, and confer with the Peer Support Program Manager, if available, to determine if further members shall be notified.
  2. When requested by the employee, or if the incident is of such a nature that trauma can be expected, either a supervisor or his/her designee shall notify an on-call or specifically requested Peer Support member to the scene.
  3. Employees may select from any available Peer Support member for assistance in handling personal problems.
  4. A chaplain may be requested to respond for assistance.
- B. Critical incident duties shall include the following:
1. Immediate response when called upon for critical incidents.
  2. Contact affected personnel to assess their needs and provide any necessary help.
  3. Provide emotional support to involved personnel to diffuse any shock reaction they may be experiencing.
  4. Provide information on possible reactions the employee or their family may experience.
  5. Suggest resources and referrals the employee or family members may require.
  6. Be sure the employee gets home safely.
  7. Explain to the employee the purpose and procedure of the mandated visit to the psychologist.
  8. Contact the employee within three days after the incident, or as necessary, to determine if additional help is needed.

## **XII. INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS**

- A. It may occur that a Peer Support member is supporting an individual who becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation. A Peer Support member should be guided by the confidentiality policy of the Peer Support Program. Peer Support members may not hamper or impede the actual investigation, nor may they attempt to shelter the individual from the Department.
- B. The Peer Support member's role in disciplinary situations will be one of support in dealing with the problems faced by the person in the disciplinary process.
- C. Peer Support members may participate as witnesses before boards and hearings as any Department employee would. They are free to testify on behalf of another employee, and with the permission of the employee, provide information which would normally be considered confidential. When asked or subpoenaed by the Department or other board or body to provide testimony, Peer Support members shall appear and testify.