



Police Department

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DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 23-07

OFFICE of the CHIEF OF POLICE

DATE: April 7, 2023

Wellness and Peer Support Program

I. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this order is to provide a policy concerning the functions and responsibilities of the Officer Wellness and Peer Support Program.

The department recognizes that its personnel, in the course of their assigned duties may encounter incidents that result in varying degrees of psychological trauma, emotional trauma, and stress. Additionally, the department recognizes that emotional trauma and stress left untreated can lead to problems for employees that may affect their ability to function in a productive manner.

By understanding the effects of critical incident stress and employing the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) procedures in this order, supervisors and Peer Support Officers (PSO) can help affected personnel after a critical incident.

The Peer Support Team is also available to officers in non-critical incidents to assist officers with managing professional and personal matters with or without the assistance of EAP.

II. DEFINITIONS.

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.

Acute Stress Disorder- An anxiety disorder 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 duties, or by department members while taking police action while 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 department personnel.
2. The line-of-duty death or injury of personnel.
3. A disaster or accident which results in loss of life.
4. Life threatening injury or death of a child.

Critical Incident Stress Management- A process designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings- A confidential group or one-on-one meetings between affected personnel and a Peer Support Team member or member of the CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) team. Debriefings are held at a scheduled time after the event is resolved.

Critical Incident Stress Management Team- The CISM team consists of mental health professionals, police officers, EMS, chaplains, and nurses. The Greater St. Louis CISM Association provides crisis intervention and educational services to First Responders. Upon request, the CISM will respond to assist in a critical incident debriefing. The Greater St. Louis CISM team is available 24 hours a day at the request of the Wellness Team Coordinator.

Qualified Mental Health Professional- An individual licensed as a mental health professional with an understanding of the law enforcement culture.

Program Service Provider- A mental health provider employed by the department to administer the mental health check-ins required in RSMO 590.192.

Employee Wellness Team Members- A group of individuals consisting of personnel who have received training in Employee Wellness and Peer Support methods.

Department Chaplain-The Department Chaplain is a resource for department members. The Chaplain can be contacted by members at their own discretion, and they need not disclose contact. All communications between the Chaplain and officers are confidential.

Wellness Team Coordinator- A Commander designated by the Chief to manage the Wellness and Peer Support Program.

Peer Support Officer (PSO) - An officer or supervisor who has received training in Peer Support and is a member of the Wellness Team. Peer Support Officers provide crisis intervention and basic support for police department members. PSOs provide referrals to EAP and other external resources. PSOs assist in critical incident debriefings and assist in educating the department about the Wellness Program.

III. SELECTION OF TEAM MEMBERS.

Participation as a team member is voluntary and unpaid. Wellness Team members shall be non-probationary officers comprised of various ranks. Wellness Team members shall be selected by the following characteristics:

- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Interpersonal skills with an emphasis on listening skills
- Peer credibility based on, but not limited to, experience, and an ability to relate to or appreciate the stress that the employee is experiencing.

Officers who are selected for the Wellness Team will be appointed by the Chief, after consultation with the Wellness Team Coordinator. Officers selected for the team will be required to attend an approved Peer Support course of training. Ongoing training will be provided when available.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY.

Confidentiality is essential to promoting trust and anonymity between Peer Support Officers (PSO) and the individual requesting assistance. Any communication between PSOs and department personnel requesting assistance is confidential and shall not be disclosed. No Wellness Team member shall take or maintain written notes of any conversation. No Wellness Team member is authorized to record any conversation related to the Wellness Team. All PSOs will sign an acknowledgement form that they understand the confidentiality agreement and will abide by it. The signed acknowledgement form will be retained by the Wellness Team Coordinator. Any violation of confidentiality should be brought to the attention of the Wellness Team Coordinator or Chief of Police immediately. Violations of the confidentiality agreement will result in disciplinary action. These provisions shall not apply to PSOs who conduct peer counseling sessions and communicate with EAP on behalf of the affected employee.

Exceptions to Confidentiality:

The rights and privacy of employees will be protected to the maximum extent possible. However, the gravity of some situations may require the attention of command staff. Wellness team members are instructed to maintain confidentiality in all situations except the following:

- When the circumstances indicate that the employee being assisted is a danger to themselves or others.
- When there is disclosure of criminal behavior.
- When required by law as a mandated reporter.
- When a situation dictates an exception to confidentiality, the PSO will immediately notify the Wellness Team Coordinator, or in their absence a commander.

V. ROLE OF THE PEER SUPPORT OFFICER.

PSOs are not a substitute for professional counseling. PSOs are not trained mental health professionals and may not diagnose nor treat mental health conditions. The role of the Peer Support Officer is to listen and facilitate resources as appropriate.

- PSOs can provide referrals to EAP.
- Assist in incident debriefings.
- Coordinate with the department mental health professional.
- Conduct hospital visitation.
- Conduct follow up peer support.
- Help with death notification.
- Support with career-related issues.
- Support with family and relationship issues.
- Substance abuse issues.

All contact with PSOs is considered voluntary. No member of the department is required to meet with a PSO. No supervisor shall mandate a PSO to contact a department member or use the Peer Support Program for disciplinary purposes.

Contact with a department member can be made by a PSO in good faith for incidents involving a high likelihood for traumatic stress. It is solely the decision of the department member to accept or reject peer support.

A department member may contact a PSO at any time whether on or off duty. The PSO will try to accommodate the member with a meeting at their earliest convenience.

Meetings will be confidential with no notes or recordings made. In general, meetings will be at the station or in a public place or by phone. PSOs will make referrals when an issue exceeds their capabilities.

PSOs shall refrain from romantic and economic relationships with those they counsel. Role conflicts should be brought to the attention of the Wellness Team Coordinator or Chief of Police.

VI. PROCEDURE.

A roster of PSOs will be posted in roll call and available for officer use.

New officers will be introduced to the Peer Support Program by their Field Training Officer and a more in-depth explanation of the program will be done by a PSO later.

In critical incident situations, the watch commander will contact the Wellness Team Coordinator to arrange for a peer support contact. Depending on the facts and circumstances of the incident, the Wellness Team Coordinator will determine the immediacy of the PSO contact. In critical incidents wherein the officer requests a PSO, the watch commander will relay such information to the Wellness Team Coordinator who will expedite the PSO contact.

The Wellness Team Coordinator will also consult with the Bureau Commander and Chief of Police on the activation of the Greater St. Louis CISM Association. Should an activation be made, the Wellness Team Coordinator will make the activation and coordinate the debriefing.

At the conclusion of the debriefing, resources will be provided to the affected officer for future counseling sessions if desired.

All discussions and activity of the affected department member and the CISM team, PSO, and Wellness Team shall remain confidential.

VII. COMPLIANCE WITH RSMO 590.192.

In compliance with RSMO 590.192, "All peace officers shall be required to meet with a program service provider once every three to five years for a mental health check-in. The program service provider shall send a notification to the peace officer's commanding officer that he or she completed such check-in."

"Any information disclosed by a peace officer during their mental health check-in, shall be privileged and shall not be used as evidence in criminal, administrative, or civil proceedings against the peace officer unless:

- A program representative reasonably believes the disclosure is necessary to prevent harm to a person who received services or to prevent harm to another person.
- The person who received the services provides written consent to the disclosure; or
- The person receiving services discloses information that is required to be reported under mandatory reporting laws."

To remain compliant with RSMO 590.192, this department will contract with a program service provider to administer the mental health check-ins. All officers shall be required to meet once every three years with the provider. The department may contract with EAP or another area provider.

The Wellness Team Coordinator will assign personnel to meet with the provider at either the station or the provider's office depending on availability. Personnel will receive notification of their scheduled appointment via email at least 30 days in advance. All scheduled meetings will be on-duty and are mandatory.

Should an officer have a scheduling conflict on their assigned date with the provider, they will be required to submit a To/From to the Wellness Team Coordinator explaining the reason for requesting a new date. Any requests for schedule changes must be made a minimum of one week in advance.

Should an officer fail to meet with the provider on the actual date of their scheduled meeting, they will be required to complete a To/From explaining the reason for not attending the meeting. The To/From will be addressed to the Wellness Team Coordinator and a copy sent to the Chief of Police.

Officers who fail to report for their scheduled meeting without just cause, will face disciplinary action.

VIII. RESOURCES FOR OFFICERS.

Peer Support Officers- See the sheet posted in roll call for the most current list or contact the Wellness Team Coordinator.

Employee Assistance Plan- The EAP has confidential and professional services to help employees manage many stressors such as: relationships, job stress, parenting, health and nutrition, finances, grief, and loss. EAP also helps with money management, identity theft, and will preparation. EAP provides no identifying information to employers about employee contact. EAP can be contacted 24 hours a day at (800) 356-0845 or online at

paseap.com. A brochure of EAP services is posted in roll call and is also available through Human Resources, or through any member of the Wellness Team.

Anthem BlueCross/BlueShield- Department members and their family members enrolled in the city's health care plan are entitled to mental health counseling through Anthem BCBS. Department members may go online to Anthem.com to view a list of providers or call member services at 833-578-4436 for assistance.

Missouri CIT App- The Missouri CIT app is free to law enforcement. It provides: an officer wellness toolkit, self-assessments, therapist finder, fitness and injury prevention, and upcoming conferences and training. Under the "Additional Resources" tab, there are additional links to crisis hotlines, financial resources, mental health counseling, resiliency and wellness, and survivor links. The app can be downloaded to any smartphone or scan the QR code from the sheet posted in roll call.

Hotlines and Websites:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline- (800) 273-TALK (8255)

Veterans/Military Crisis Line-(800) 273-TALK (8255) press 1,
www.veteranscrisisline.net

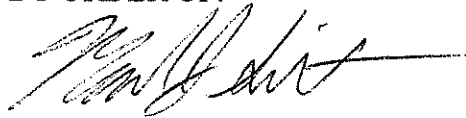
National Domestic Violence Hotline-(800) 799-SAFE (7233)

National Center for PTSD- www.ptsd.va.gov

National Institute of Mental Health- www.nimh.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)-
www.samsha.gov national helpline (800) 662-HELP (4357). Free, confidential, 24/7 treatment referral and information service.

BY ORDER OF:



MARK J. SMITH
Chief of Police

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