



ROANOKE POLICE DEPARTMENT	Operational Directive: 84.2.2
Subject: Peer Support Team	Review Date: February 10, 2014
Effective Date: February 28, 2014	Approved: _____ C.C. Perkins, Chief of Police
Amends/Supercedes: 6/21/13, 5/31/11, 7/25/07, 5/25/05, 12/05/01, 10/4/94	CALEA Standard(s): 22.2.3 Academy: 4.4.9

NOTE:

This policy is for Departmental use only and shall not apply in any criminal or civil proceedings. The Department policy should not be construed as a creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this Directive will be basis for Departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.

I. PURPOSE

To provide guidance to the voluntary utilization of the Peer Support Team.

II. POLICY

The Department has assembled and trained a group of Department personnel to provide peer support to Department employees in need of assistance. The personnel serving as members of the Peer Support Team will be available to provide assistance to employees involved in critical or stressful incidents. Department employees utilizing such services will have the option of asking for the same services for a significant other or immediate family.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. For the purpose of this Operational Directive, the following definitions will be applicable:

1. Critical Incident: Any event that has emotional power to overwhelm an individual's usual ability to cope and which may interfere with the functioning of a person's coping skills immediately or in the future.
2. Peer Support Team: A team composed of personnel with training in critical incident management.
3. Peer Support Team Member: A member of the Department trained in critical incident management to recognize and understand stress reactions during and after critical incidents.

4. Debriefing: A closed confidential discussion of a critical incident with those directly involved prior to, during and after a stressful event. This discussion is intended to provide support, education and an outlet for views and feelings associated with the event. Debriefings are neither counseling nor an operational critique of the incident.
5. Defusing: A brief, confidential discussion between person(s) involved in a critical incident and Peer Support Team member(s) immediately following an incident. The purpose of a defusing is to prepare the employee to the possibility of future stress reactions from the incident. Defusing usually occurs within eight hours of the incident.
6. Individual Debriefing: A private discussion that occurs between Peer Support Team member(s) and an employee regarding a stressful incident. Family members or others may be included upon request of the employee.
7. Peer Support Team Debriefing: A closed confidential discussion with a person or persons involved in an incident and Peer Support Team members.
8. Behavioral or Medical Healthcare Professional: A board certified psychologist or psychiatrist approved by the Chief and chosen to assist Peer Support Team members as needed.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

- A. A person who is a member of the Peer Support Team shall not disclose any information communicated to him by emergency medical services or public safety personnel who are the subjects of peer support services regarding a critical incident. Such information shall also be exempt from the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.
- B. It is mandatory that Peer Support Team members maintain strict confidentiality in matters discussed in peer debriefings, defusing or peer support meetings. As members of the Peer Support Team are also employees of the Department they are bound under certain laws to report the following incidents if divulged. The provisions of §19.2-271.4, COV shall not apply when:
 1. Criminal activity is revealed;
 2. A member of Peer Support Team is a witness or a party to a critical incident that prompted the peer support services;

3. A member of Peer Support Team reveals the content of privileged information to prevent a crime against any other person or a threat to public safety;
 4. The privileged information reveals intent to defraud or deceive the investigation into the critical incident; or
 5. A member of the Peer Support Team reveals the content of privileged information to the employer of the emergency medical services or public safety personnel regarding criminal acts committed or information that would indicate that the emergency medical services or public safety personnel pose a threat to themselves or others.
- C. Participants will be advised of the confidential nature of the meeting(s) and the exceptions to confidentiality at the beginning of each and every meeting, debriefing and/or defusing. Peer Support Team members who become aware of any exception will discuss the exception only with the Chief or his designee.
- D. The Peer Support Team is not an investigative unit of the Department. Therefore it will not be the policy or practice of this Department to interfere with or question Peer Support Team members or any other participant involved in a Peer Support Team meeting, debriefing or defusing concerning the content of such discussions.
- V. PROCEDURES
- A. Initiation of the Peer Support Team
1. Employees experiencing emotional stress may initiate contact with a Peer Support Team member at any time.
 2. A defusing should be offered as soon as possible after the conclusion of an incident **and usually within eight hours**. Defusing procedures should be offered when the following types of stressful incidents occur or as needed:
 - a. All police shootings;
 - b. Death or serious injury(s) to a Department employee or immediate family member; and/or
 - c. Other incidents as determined by a supervisor, the involved employee or Peer Support Team member.
 3. In cases of serious violent injury to a Department employee, the employee will be offered the opportunity to participate in a defusing as soon as possible following the incident.

- B. Responsibilities of the Peer Support Team
 - 1. The appropriate Bureau Captain or his designee is responsible for notifying Peer Support Team members of a critical incident and giving them information about the incident and employees involved.
 - 2. Once notified, Peer Support Team members will respond to the location specified by the supervisor who made the notification.
 - a. Peer Support Team members should conduct a defusing for those involved immediately following an incident.
 - b. Peer Support Team members will follow-up with all employees involved in a defusing within 30 days to ensure that any prolonged or delayed reactions are addressed and to initiate referrals if necessary.
 - c. Peer Support Team members are to consult with an appropriate health care professional when necessary and will not give advice which is outside the scope of their training.
 - 3. Peer Support Team members are responsible for coordinating critical incident management training and other activities involving the Peer Support Team.
 - 4. Peer Support Team members will maintain a confidential record of types of incidents and number of defusings that are conducted.

VI. REINTRODUCTION OF MILITARY AND CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL

- A. All of the definitions, confidentiality requirements, procedures and responsibilities outlined in this Operational Directive are applicable to the reintroduction of military and contractor personnel within the parameters of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).
- B. The Peer Support Team will include the position of Liaison Officer. The Liaison Officer must be a member of the Department and must be a veteran. The Liaison Officer will be responsible for the following duties in addition to his Peer Support Team duties and responsibilities.
 - 1. Maintain a comprehensive understanding of USERRA and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA);
 - 2. Maintain a complete understanding of the Department's EAP;
 - 3. Maintain a current list of Peer Support Team members;

4. Be responsible for assisting employees who are being deployed, including any paperwork and Department equipment turn-in processes;
5. Maintain an adequate supply of the most current version of the publication *Combat Veterans & Law Enforcement* as well as maintain a resource list of publications and a resource contact list related to veterans' issues;
6. Develop and maintain a relationship with the local military Transition Assistance Officer;
7. Be responsible for maintaining contact with deployed employees, encouraging Department wide involvement;
8. Ensure that deployed employees who are eligible for promotion are notified and allowed to participate in the promotional process;
9. Serve as the families' point of contact with the Department and be responsible for proactive, regular contact with the deployed employees' family providing appropriate support to the family;
10. Involve deployed employees' family members in Department functions;
11. Be responsible for ensuring that a member of the Peer Support Team meets all returning veteran(s) at the airport or other local disembarkment point specifically to acknowledge the employees' return and to acknowledge the employees' sacrifice and commitment;
12. Be responsible for planning a Department wide welcome home ceremony/celebration in honor of the veteran(s) which will include the family.
13. Conduct focus groups with returning veteran employees to determine what assistance is needed, determine if the employee is experiencing any problems and identify any real or perceived problems in the reintegration process;
14. Participate in and build the Peer Support Team to include other officers who are veterans;
15. Provide Peer Support Team members training in post deployment debriefing skills;
16. Assist in coordinating training to Command Staff and sergeants designed to provide an understanding of the issues facing returning veterans;

17. Ensure that the Chief has a one-on-one welcome back meeting with the returning veteran;
 18. Be familiar with the symptoms associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and be prepared to make appropriate EAP recommendations; and
 19. Learn about any specialized training received by the veterans while deployed and provide this information to the Academy staff.
 20. The Department will attempt to have a licensed mental health professional with a specialty in post traumatic stress disorder training serve as a resource to the Peer Support Team and returning veterans. The participation of a licensed mental health professional does not create a professional/contractual relationship between any employee and the licensed mental health professional. Neither the Department nor any member of the Peer Support Team recommends or endorses any licensed mental health professional.
- C. The Academy will, in conjunction with the Liaison Officer, provide returning personnel with the following:
1. Driver training if sworn;
 2. Firearms training if sworn;
 3. Use of Force training if sworn;
 4. New and revised Constitutional, federal, state and city law training if sworn;
 5. Geographical reorientation if sworn;
 6. Scenario based training to include shoot-don't-shoot, traffic stops and traffic direction and control and dealing with the civilian population if sworn;
 7. A review of new/revised Department policies and procedures and new COV;
 8. Oversee the Department's transition process for the returning veteran including all training and paperwork
 9. All necessary training to maintain their law enforcement certification if sworn;

10. Assigned to an FTO who is a veteran of at least equal rank and seniority if sworn;
11. Diversity training;
12. Opportunities to use veterans' skill sets in Department wide training, if and only if, the veteran approves, and
13. Provide regular input to Academy staff regarding returning employees' performance readiness.

CCP: ahp/pjp