

CHAPTER 2
PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM
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CHAPTER 2
PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE.

a. The purpose of the Peer Support Program (PSP) is to prevent and/or lessen the potential negative emotional or physical impact a critical incident or unsafe practice can have on a departmental employee and their family by providing emotional support, information, guidance, and assistance.

b. A critical incident is any actual or perceived event which has the potential to overwhelm a person's physical, mental, or emotional coping strategies.

2. POLICY.

a. The PSP shall consist of volunteer uniformed employees, dispatchers, and associates. Associates are PSP volunteers who were previously participating in the PSP and have since transferred into another classification or position. The PSP volunteers must have been involved in at least one critical incident professionally and/or personally and experienced some of the issues and feelings associated with such an event. The PSP volunteers will be trained to provide support and reassurance to a fellow employee who has experienced a critical incident.

b. The PSP does not take the place of the mandatory debriefing following a shooting incident.

c. Peer support is not to be considered a substitute for professional counseling.

d. All PSP activities shall be voluntary. Employees may select or reject the use of a peer by any criteria they believe is important.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY.

a. The PSP is a confidential program. The PSP volunteers shall not discuss information obtained while acting in a peer support capacity with anyone, unless required by policy or law. The PSP volunteer shall not divulge shared information with other employees, family members, friends, supervisors or management, or the general public. A PSP volunteer cannot be found insubordinate for failure to divulge information obtained as a PSP volunteer under any administrative investigation of employee misconduct other than for criminal activities. Peer support program volunteers may consult with the Office of Employee Safety and

Assistance (OESA) or other peers for guidance on how to provide assistance and resources to those seeking the PSP help. This is not considered a breach of confidentiality.

b. Employees shall be advised that confidentiality will be strictly maintained except in the following circumstances:

(1) The protection of confidentiality within the Department shall not apply to employee misconduct which constitutes criminal activity. The PSP volunteers shall divulge information obtained from an employee who acknowledges participation in misconduct which constitutes criminal activity to the employee's commander and in any subsequent departmental administrative investigations.

(2) Confidentiality cannot be maintained should a PSP volunteer be subpoenaed to testify in court concerning information shared by an employee.

(3) Should a PSP volunteer, while providing PSP services to an employee, obtain information that causes the PSP volunteer to believe the employee may be an immediate danger to themselves or others, the PSP volunteer shall immediately notify the employee's commander and the OESA who will assist in determining what steps should be taken.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM.

a. The PSP is administered and overseen by the OESA, Employee Assistance Unit. The program is comprised of the following:

(1) Commander, OESA.

(2) Lieutenant, OESA.

(3) Program Coordinator (OESA Supervisor).

(4) Division Peer Leads (within OESA).

(5) Division Peer Liaison.

(6) Peer Support Program Volunteer.

b. The OESA commander shall provide policy and procedure recommendations to Executive Management.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. Program Coordinator.

- (1) Coordinate the recruitment, selection, and training of PSP volunteers.
- (2) Maintain a listing of professional resources for potential referrals.
- (3) Coordinate PSP efforts between PSP volunteers, commanders, union representatives, critical incident investigation teams, referral therapists, and the Department.
- (4) Serve as a member of the Department's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT).
- (5) Maintain an accounting of resources utilized by the PSP, including time and equipment.
- (6) Oversees the evaluation procedures of therapists utilized by employees for Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD).
- (7) Assemble educational materials that can be utilized by the PSP for training. Provide PSP awareness through employee orientation and training.
- (8) Attend related conferences and training seminars to maintain expertise.
- (9) Compile and provide a monthly report of activities as requested by the OESA commander.
- (10) Ensure participants adhere to the PSP's confidentiality policies.
- (11) Provide ongoing evaluation of the PSP using employee surveys and other methods deemed appropriate by the OESA.
- (12) Oversees the daily operations of the Division Peer Leads.
- (13) Receive complaints regarding any part of the PSP and process complaints through the OESA commander.
- (14) Assess training needs, report significant trends, and track the composition and geographic locations of PSP volunteers.
- (15) Advise the OESA commander of any issues of possible concern to the Department arising from PSP activity.

b. Division Peer Leads.

(1) The PSP Coordinator may assign OESA employees to work as Division Peer Leads as needed. The following positions can serve as Division Peer Leads:

- (a) Officer.
- (b) Staff Services Analyst.

(2) Roles of Division Peer Leads.

- (a) Stay up-to-date on PSP activities within their assigned Division(s).
- (b) Respond to requests from commands and PSP volunteers for program materials.
- (c) Coordinate the deployment of PSP volunteers and CISDs for commands as directed.
- (d) Work directly with Division Peer Liaisons for the planning and development of Division Quarterly Training.
- (e) Keep OESA command staff informed of peer needs and situations within their assigned Division(s).

c. Division Peer Liaison.

(1) Protocol for Selection of a Division Peer Liaison.

(a) The OESA will select a qualified Division Peer Liaison based upon the following criteria:

- 1 A manager within the PSP would be preferred.
- 2 A uniformed or dispatch supervisor is acceptable.
- 3 An officer is acceptable if a supervisor or manager are not selected.
- 4 Required to be a current member of the PSP.
- 5 Required to work within the Division they will be associated with.

(2) Roles of Division Peer Liaison.

(a) Serve as a liaison between the OESA and Division peers.

(b) Be familiar with each peer within their Division.

(c) Assist the OESA with setting up any CISD as needed.

1 Assist the OESA and Area commands by providing pertinent logistical information for CISDs.

a Logistical information should include: date, time, location, and a list of peers who will be attending. The OESA will contact a vetted therapist for the CISD.

2 Assist Area commands with setting up CISDs in the designated locations.

(d) Facilitate Division Quarterly Training.

1 Prepare a Communications Network Message to peers in their Division providing the date, time, and location of the training. The training dates will be provided by the PSP coordinator.

2 Notify the OESA via e-mail of the PSP volunteers who will not be attending training.

3 Select the location for the training day.

4 Set up any necessary audio and visual equipment needed to conduct the training.

5 Discuss recent CISDs, introduce new peers, and cover resources specific to the Division.

(e) Assist the OESA in recruiting potential new PSP volunteers.

d. Peer Support Program Volunteers.

(1) Recognize that participation in the PSP is voluntary and be available to provide support and make a reasonable attempt to remain available to an employee if contacted.

(2) Maintain contact with the Division Peer Leads or Division Peer Liaison for debriefings and review of PSP activities.

- (3) Keep all communications strictly confidential except as provided in the confidentiality policy statement in paragraph 3.
- (4) When requested, attend debriefing(s) following a major critical incident and aid the therapist in conducting the debriefing(s).
- (5) When requested, serve as a member of the Department's CIRT.
- (6) Be available for support, if requested, during trials or the anniversary of an incident.
- (7) Abstain from any intimate social relationship (e.g., dating) with any employee, employee's family member, or departmental personnel to whom the PSP volunteer is supporting.
- (8) Abstain from religious or financial entanglements with the employee.
- (9) Avoid espousing any particular moral standard or philosophy to the employee.
- (10) Assist in the presentation of OESA-related programs to employees.
- (11) Assist with OESA-related training as requested.
- (12) Attend the required Annual Peer Support Training Conference and Division Quarterly Training meetings.

6. COMMANDERS.

- a. A commander may request the services of a PSP volunteer under the following circumstances:
 - (1) When an employee has been involved in a critical incident and the commander feels peer support would be appropriate.
 - (2) When the commander deems a PSP volunteer may benefit the employee.
- b. If an employee declines support, the commander shall respect the employee's decision.
- c. Commanders will assist in the selection of PSP volunteers by making recommendations as described in paragraph 7.
- d. It is recommended commanders annually review the current PSP volunteers assigned within their Area and notify the OESA when the PSP volunteer should not

be used (i.e., administrative time off or subject to an internal or criminal investigation).

7. SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS.

a. The commander of OESA, the PSP coordinator, and/or their designee(s) shall select, and interview recommended employees for PSP volunteers based upon their qualifications and the needs of the Department.

b. Recruitment and selection of candidates as PSP volunteers will be an ongoing function of the PSP. The PSP volunteers will be selected from employees working in uniformed and communications classifications who have demonstrated an ability to cope with a traumatic event and effectively deal with their peers.

c. Interested employees shall submit a memorandum to the OESA through channels to their commander indicating an interest in the PSP and describe their critical incident and experience(s).

d. Commanders will make a recommendation regarding the employee's suitability for participation based upon job performance, observed interpersonal skills, maturity, judgment, and personal and professional credibility. Commanders should review the employee's personnel folder to ensure the employee has not been the subject of an adverse action that might adversely affect the function of the PSP. Recommendations will be submitted to the respective Division commander for comment and forwarded through channels to the PSP coordinator. Recommendations may be withdrawn at any time by notifying the PSP coordinator.

8. DISQUALIFICATION OF VOLUNTEERS.

a. A PSP volunteer who fails to fulfill any of the responsibilities of a PSP volunteer may be removed from the program at the discretion of the PSP coordinator, the OESA commander, the employee's commander, Division, or Executive Management.

b. The integrity of the PSP is essential to its effectiveness. Any breach of confidentiality or other inappropriate activity by a PSP volunteer shall be sufficient cause to be removed from the PSP.

c. A PSP volunteer may permanently or temporarily remove themselves from the PSP by notifying the OESA in writing through their chain of command.

(1) For PSP volunteers wanting to return to the program, they shall submit a memorandum expressing their interest, and submit it through the appropriate

channels to the OESA. The PSP volunteer expressing interest in returning to the program will be interviewed by the OESA prior to resuming peer responsibilities.

d. Failure to attend the Annual Peer Support Training Conference and Division Quarterly Training meetings may be grounds for removal from the PSP.

9. TRAINING.

a. A PSP volunteer shall receive 32 hours of initial training by a contracted International Critical Incident Stress Foundation instructor to include the following:

(1) Information on typical immediate short- and long-term psychological reactions to critical incidents.

(2) Skills in active listening, providing support, referrals to professionals, debriefing, and defusing.

(3) Policies and procedures of the PSP, legal issues, and the responsibilities and limitations of the PSP volunteer.

b. A PSP volunteer shall attend the Annual Peer Support Training Conference to maintain their certification unless otherwise approved by OESA. Peer Support Program volunteers are also required to attend Division Quarterly Training. Training will include the following:

(1) Updates on relevant information.

(2) Maintenance of skills.

(3) Specialized training topics.

10. OBTAINING SERVICES.

a. Employees may contact PSP volunteers directly for support in dealing with reactions to critical incidents. Departmental or supervisory approval or notification is not required.

b. Employees may request services by contacting the OESA.

(1) The OESA can be reached 24-hours a day, 7 days a week through the dedicated employee assistance line at (916) 843-3320.

c. Commanders or a designee should request a PSP volunteer whenever a critical incident occurs and peer support appears appropriate, using the following guidelines:

(1) If a specific PSP volunteer is requested, every effort should be made to contact that volunteer.

(2) The nearest PSP volunteer, as appropriate, will be contacted for non-shooting critical incident response. When possible, a PSP volunteer who has been involved in a shooting incident will be notified for a critical incident involving a shooting.

(3) The responding PSP volunteer should be of an equal rank/classification as the involved employee.

(4) When requested to respond, the PSP volunteer should be provided with, at minimum, the name and rank of the employee(s) involved, the location of the employee(s), and the nature of the critical incident.

d. The PSP volunteers responding to a request should coordinate their activities with the on-scene commander, scene manager, and the involved employee's immediate supervisor.

e. If unable to contact a PSP volunteer when needed, the commander or their designee should notify the OESA.

11. TIME REPORTING/STATE VEHICLE USAGE.

a. The PSP volunteer shall notify their commander and receive approval prior to accepting and responding to a critical incident, whether on or off duty.

b. Use of a state vehicle is authorized provided a vehicle is available. If a state vehicle is not available or is impractical, the PSP volunteer's commander shall approve reimbursement for the use of a private vehicle.

c. Approval of the appropriate Commissioner is required for use of departmental aircraft.

d. An on-duty PSP volunteer will be allowed to claim regular shift time when approved by the PSP volunteer's commander.

e. With prior approval, an off-duty PSP volunteer will be allowed the appropriate compensating time off when granted by the PSP volunteer's commander.

f. The PSP volunteers shall record approved peer support activity on the appropriate timesheet; a CHP 415, Daily Field Record; or CHP 71, Attendance Report, as required.

(1) On the CHP 415, under the appropriate Regular or Overtime column utilize Beat Code 915 in the Beat section. Special Project Code 915 will be used in the Special Project section when recording Overtime. The letters "PSP" shall be entered in the Notes section of the CHP 415.

(2) In the Remarks section of the CHP 71, the letters "PSP" shall be entered and "RDO" if overtime was worked on a regular day off.

g. The name of the employee to whom support was provided shall not be noted. The assigned command shall be entered for the entire shift for any overtime claimed, regardless of where PSP activities were conducted.

h. Any PSP activities which are not approved by the PSP volunteer's commander are strictly voluntary and are to be conducted on the PSP volunteer's own time. Such activities shall not interfere with any regular work obligations.