
Peer Support Program

1033.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Peer Support Team's purpose is to provide a confidential and readily accessible support system dedicated to assisting employees during times of professional and personal crisis. Team members are required to be highly trained, responsive, compassionate peers with a commitment to providing emotional support and assistance to all employees. Further, the vision of the Peer Support Team is to enhance the personal and professional lives of all employees of the Santa Ana Police Department through education, outreach and validation.

1033.2 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- (a) To provide a readily accessible support network of employees and chaplains trained and willing to assist police employees in dealing with and recovering from traumatic incidents, accidents, and other situations that may negatively impact the employee in the future.
- (b) To promote trust, allow for anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for employees.
- (c) To maintain an effective and ongoing peer support training process.
- (d) Through training, enhance the employee's ability to anticipate personal difficulties and to provide an awareness of assistance available through the Peer Support Team (PST).
- (e) Develop Peer Support personnel who can provide guidance or refer police employees to mental health professionals and alternative resources as required.
- (f) Create a supportive network designed to check on the status of employees who are off work due to illness or duty-related injuries and provide support where desired or needed.

1033.3 PEER SUPPORT TEAM STRUCTURE

1033.3.1 ROLE OF THE PEER SUPPORT TEAM CORE GROUP

The Peer Support Team Core Group will serve as the procedure-setting group for the PST program. The designated Bureau Commander will serve as the administrative liaison for the PST Core Group. The PST Core Group will be selected by the PST Program Coordinator, approved by the designated Bureau Commander, and consist of six PST members representing different ranks, including sworn and non-sworn. The contracted psychological services professionals will serve in a support capacity providing advisory, training, and referral assistance.

1033.3.2 ROLE OF THE PEER SUPPORT TEAM PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The PST Program Coordinator will be an experienced team member, selected by the PST Core Group and approved by the designated Bureau Commander. The PST Program Coordinator will be responsible for the following:

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- Coordinate and maintain liaison between the PST Core Group, resource persons and other Department members
- New team member recruitment and coordination of applicant screening
- Coordinate training of PST members
- Develop resources to assist PST members when problem areas are identified
- Maintain a count of reported contacts by peer counselors for statistical purposes
- Maintain an accounting of resources used by the program
- Offer guidance to peer support members

1033.4 PEER SUPPORT TEAM PARTICIPATION

1033.4.1 SELECTION PROCESS

When an opening on the team becomes available, a memorandum shall be published requesting applicants to fill the vacancy. Applicants shall meet the following qualifications:

- (a) Express a desire to be a PST team member.
- (b) No work restrictions involving psychological stress.
- (c) Endorsement through the chain of command.
- (d) Not currently the object of a serious or major investigation or suffering from serious personal problems.
- (e) Applicants shall submit a change of assignment request describing why they wish to participate in the program as well as relevant qualifications and experience that he/she believes would benefit the program.

Candidates will participate in an interview panel consisting of PST members and one outside panelist from the City's psychological services provider or a member of the County's Peer Support Network. A background check consisting of a review of personnel files and interviews with supervisors and/or co-workers to assess the candidate's suitability for the program. Candidates who pass all phases of the selection process will be placed on an eligibility list. The PST Program Coordinator will confer with members of the PST Core Group and submit selection recommendations to the designated Bureau Commander, who will make the final selection.

1033.4.2 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon selection, Peer Support Team members will be required to fulfill the following criteria:

- (a) Demonstrate strong ethics and agree to maintain confidentiality within the guidelines provided in this policy.
- (b) Be empathetic and possess good interpersonal and communication skills.
- (c) Be motivated and willing to manage time effectively in order to minimize disruption to his/her normal duties.

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- (d) Willingness to attend any required initial and on-going training, as well as scheduled meetings.

1033.4.3 REJECTION AND REMOVAL PROCESS

In the event an applicant for the Peer Support Team fails to successfully complete any phase of the testing process they will be eliminated from the selection process.

A member who resigns in good standing may request reinstatement at any time if a vacancy is available. A member may be reinstated with the recommendation of the PST Program Coordinator and approval by the Designated Bureau Commander.

In the case of an involuntary removal from the program, such a decision will be subject to recommendation of the PST Core Group, and the final decision will rest with the Program Coordinator.

The Department will retain the right to remove a PST member for substandard work performance or other organizational issues.

1033.5 CHAPLAIN PARTICIPATION

Members of the Department's Chaplain program may participate in the PST with the approval of the PST Core Group, the PST Program Coordinator, and designated Bureau Commander. Chaplains who wish to be a part of the program will attend the same basic training as any other member of the PST and must agree to attend team training events. In addition to their duties in accordance with the Chaplain program, Chaplains who become part of the PST may be included in PST activities, including group debriefings, to offer additional support to the employees.

When there is a potential issue of confidentiality, the use of a Department Chaplain should be considered to maintain the employee's confidentiality as well as the integrity of the program. Chaplains may be removed from the program by the designated PST Program Coordinator based on organizational needs.

1033.6 PEER SUPPORT TEAM TRAINING

The PST Program Coordinator will be responsible for maintaining liaison with outside consultants in the coordination and scheduling of training activities.

1033.6.1 PEER SUPPORT TRAINING

The initial PST training will include the Basic Peer Support course and the Basic Critical Incident Stress Management course. This training is intended to provide a basic understanding of techniques used in the following areas:

- (a) Developing rapport with an employee undergoing personal or job-related crisis.
- (b) Enhancing listening skills.
- (c) Provide the counselor with general assessment skills to assist in problem-solving to include, but not be limited to, the following:
 1. Officer-involved shootings

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2. Traumatic police-related incidents
 3. Severely injured employees
 4. Long-term illness or injury
 5. Critical family crisis (regardless of duty relationship)
 6. Chemical dependency (only within expertise and limitations of program; others will be referred)
- (d) Providing referrals and follow-up if necessary

1033.6.2 FOLLOW-UP TRAINING FOR PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS

Periodic training programs (ideally once per quarter) will be conducted with the assistance of specialists in the following areas:

- Problem-solving workshops
- Referral workshops
- Advanced skills workshops
- Post-shooting trauma workshops
- Chemical dependency/alcohol and substance abuse workshops
- Grief Workshops

1033.7 TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Peer Support Team members have a responsibility to:

- (a) Convey trust and anonymity to employees who seek assistance from the peer support program.
- (b) Provide assistance to employees on a voluntary basis;
 1. Assistance may occur on or off-duty.
- (c) Make referrals for assistance when deemed appropriate.
- (d) Participate fully in program activities.
- (e) Agree to be contacted and, if reasonable, respond at any hour.
- (f) Develop a sincere rapport with the individual employee and maintain confidentiality as adopted by the Peer Support Core Group.
 1. Each person's situation is unique: The PST member's mission will be to help individuals identify their own concerns and to assist these individuals in helping themselves.
- (g) Remain available to the individual and offer additional support as necessary.
- (h) Provide feedback to the PST Core Group regarding program activities and the effectiveness of the programs as well as confidential statistical data regarding contacts in order to assist in training and staffing.

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1033.8 POST-INCIDENT DEBRIEFS

While it is difficult to identify incidents that will require a debriefing due to the various circumstances employees might encounter, the following is a list of incidents that will require a group debriefing with mandatory attendance by all involved employees unless waived by Peer Support's designated Bureau Commander based on the circumstances of that incident:

- Any event in which an employee is killed or suffers serious injury
- Any officer involved shooting incident
- Employee suicide
- Employee witnessed another employee's death or injury
- Employee is taken hostage
- Employee is a witness to suicide
- Employee is a witness to violent death/serious injury
- Infant or child death
- Fatal traffic collisions or collisions with extenuating circumstances
- Employee is involved in a mass casualty event
- Any other incident deemed appropriate by the affected Commander, Watch Commander, affected Deputy Chief, or the Chief of Police

Debriefs in which attendance is optional may be offered following any event not listed above in which a need is communicated to the Program Coordinator by anyone in the department. Debriefs should be conducted as soon as practical following a critical incident and should be held within 24-72 hours after the critical incident occurs.

1033.9 CONFIDENTIALITY

Communication between a PST member and an employee is considered confidential by the Department except as outlined in this policy; however, these communications are not protected by the California Evidence Code and may be discoverable in court proceedings. If the employee communicates issues exempted in this policy, there should be no expectation of privacy. When concerns regarding confidentiality of communications arise and cannot be resolved, the PST member should contact the Program Coordinator, the designated Bureau Commander or any Core Team Member for guidance. The final decision, if the issue is not resolved, shall rest with the Program Coordinator.

PST members are required to disclose reports of all threats of future harm to a known victim (as directed in *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California*, 13 C3d425, 131 CAL Report, 14 351 P2D 334), as well as all incidents involving threats or actual injury to self or others, any information regarding the commission of a crime, or as compelled by a court of competent jurisdiction.

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1033.10 PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION AND PUBLICATION

PST participants will be identified by their names, assignment, and work extensions. This information will be posted on the SAPD intranet and bulletin boards throughout the department. The PST may distribute a periodic bulletin containing information regarding the program, such as training workshop notices, suggested reading material, helpful counseling tips, and referral information.

1033.11 OVERTIME GUIDELINES

The role of the Peer Support Team is to provide assistance in time of need. In most cases, assistance should take the form of on-duty meetings of relatively short duration, usually not exceeding four hours. In the event that overtime is required, the counselor's immediate supervisor, the Program Coordinator, or a supervisory member of the PST Core Group shall authorize it in advance when practical. If circumstances preclude advance approval, it shall be obtained as soon as possible thereafter.

1033.12 DISCIPLINE

If a PST member assists an individual who is currently, or later becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation, the PST member should adhere to the confidentiality requirements listed in Department Policy 1033.9; however, PST members shall not hamper or impede the disciplinary investigation, nor attempt to shelter the individual from the Department. The PST member's role in assisting employees facing disciplinary situations is supportive in nature. PST members will only assist and support these employees through the problems they may face in the disciplinary process. If at any time a PST member finds it necessary to invoke the confidentiality provisions of the program, they should consult the Program Coordinator of the PST or the designated Bureau Commander for guidance and assistance. The final decision as to confidentiality will rest with the Program Coordinator.

1033.13 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Except where noted otherwise, participation by any employee needing assistance or support will be strictly voluntary. No reference, either positive or negative, should be made by a member of this Department if an employee elects not to use the program. Unless otherwise approved or working already, employees receiving services from PST members will not be on duty.