

## Peer Support Program

### 1011.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Almost everyone has experience or will experience, a stressful situation in his/her lifetime. It is during these times that family and friends come to the rescue. They are able to provide needed support and understanding that help overcome life's problems. The Peer Support Program is one of those "friends" who is available to every Corona Police Department employee.

This policy has three specific objectives:

- (a) It provides a background for understanding the department's Peer Support Program;
- (b) It provides practical guidelines for management of the program;
- (c) It provides the Members with guidelines for assisting their peers.

This policy is divided into two sections. Section One contains a description of the program, including the roles of the organizational components. In addition, it contains an outline of the information and a listing of procedures for practical administrations of the program.

Section Two describes the skills and techniques that may be used by a Member to assist persons who are faced with stressful situations. Each Member must comply with the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

As the Peer Support Program matures, policy and procedure changes are inevitable. The program Coordinator and the Members shall be required to keep open lines of communication to facilitate this evolving process. Effective, honest communication in a caring environment, balanced by the program protocol, will greatly enhance the opportunity for a successful program.

#### 1011.1.1 DEFINITION

The Peer Support Program is a Program that offers assistance and appropriate support resources to employees when personal or professional problems negatively affect their work performance, family unit or self. This communication is confidential, providing it does not violate any law or department regulation.

This program is designed to:

- (a) Provide emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to other employees who need assistance.
- (b) Promote trust, allow anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons using Peer Support within the guidelines of the program.
- (c) Develop Members who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance or referral to professional\alternate resources as required.
- (d) Maintain an effective peer support training and response program.

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- (e) Check on status of illnesses and IOD's and provide support where desired and needed.

#### **1011.2 MISSION STATEMENT**

The Corona Police Department has recognized the value of providing a way for their employees and their family members to deal with personal and/or professional problems. A successful approach to this problem has been to provide a program which offers a non-professional (peer) support program in addition to the current professional employee Assistance Program (EAP). The peer support program is composed of a group of peers who have volunteered to make themselves available to any Member of the department. This will provide a way for the Corona Police Department employees to talk out personal and/or professional problems with someone who understands and cares.

The Corona Police Department's most valuable resource is its employees. The peer support program's goal is to assist peers with stresses caused by personal and/or professional problems and help them continue to be a productive Member of the Corona Police Department.

#### **1011.3 ROLE OF MEMBERS**

The Member provides assistance to employees in time of stress and crisis. The responsibilities of Members are as follows:

- (a) Provide trust, anonymity and assure confidentiality within guidelines to employees who seek assistance from the Peer Support Program.
- (b) Attend the Peer Support training seminars: Additional training will be required as this program evolves.
- (c) Provide assistance and support on a voluntary basis to employees and family, referring him/her to the appropriate outside resource when necessary.
- (d) Be available to the individual for additional follow-up support.
- (e) Maintain contact with the Program Coordinator regarding program activities.
- (f) Agree to be contacted and, if practical, respond at any hour.

The Member is not exempt from federal, state, local laws, or the rules and regulations of the Department. When necessary, contact the Peer Support Program Coordinator for assistance and guidance.

##### **1011.3.1 ROLE OF COORDINATOR**

The Peer Support Program Coordinator acts as the primary liaison between the Members, resource persons, and the department. The Program Coordinator serves as the link to ensure that the Peer Support Program is being managed in accordance with the goals and objectives established for the program.

Major duties of the Coordinator include:

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- (a) Supervising the Program on a daily basis.
- (b) Recruiting and coordinating the screening of the applicants.
- (c) Coordinating training of Members.
- (d) Developing resources to assist individuals when problem areas are identified.
- (e) Maintaining an accounting of resources used by the program.
- (f) Offering guidance to Members when problems occur.
- (g) Ensure follow-up response of Members when referrals are made for outside services.

#### **1011.3.2 ROLE OF COUNSELING TEAM**

The Counseling Team shall:

- (a) Design a training curriculum and provide Members with basic and continuing (updated) training.
- (b) Serve as a primary referral resource.

#### **1011.4 PEER SUPPORT SELECTION PROCESS**

All interested employees who choose to volunteer as a Member must submit their request through the chain of command to the Coordinator.

Any employee of the Corona Police Department may also submit the name of a peer through their chain of command to the Coordinator for consideration as a Member.

- (a) Prospective Members must meet the following criteria:
  - 1. Agree to maintain confidentiality within the guidelines provided in this policy.
  - 2. Be in good standing with the department.
  - 3. Complete Peer Support Interest questionnaire.
- (b) Desirable qualities include:
  - 1. Be empathetic and possess interpersonal and communication skills.
  - 2. Be motivated and willing to manage time effectively. This will allow minimal impact on their normal duties.
  - 3. Effective listening and problem solving skills.

When there is a need for Members, the Coordinator will send out an informational memo seeking employees who are interested in becoming Members. Those employees will turn in a memo to their immediate supervisor and continue through the chain of command to the Captain level. After the memos have completed their route, then a list will be established. That list will then go out to all employees for a vote. When the votes are tallied, the Coordinator makes the final selection with input from the Members.

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The Coordinator will provide the Chief of Police with an updated list of Members on a bi-annual basis.

#### **1011.5 TRAINING PROGRAM**

The training program will consist of programs offered by the Counseling Team and outside sources and will be overseen by the Coordinator. The Basic Peer Support training is required by all new members. The mandatory eight hours of updated peer support training will be offered three times per year and all Members will be required to attend one eight hour course to remain a Member. The major emphasis will focus on skill development for conducting peer assistance including:

- Effective listening
- General assessment skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Relationship termination (death, divorce, etc.)
- Referral and follow-up.

##### **1011.5.1 SERVICE ASSIGNMENT**

- (a) Members may withdraw from participation at any time. They are; however, required to notify the Coordinator.
- (b) Members may be removed from participation in the program for conduct inconsistent with program policy and objectives.
- (c) Negative job performance caused by Member duties must be reported by the Member's supervisor to the program Coordinator for discussion and resolution.
- (d) Members may be removed from participation in the program if updated training is not attended annually.

##### **1011.5.2 ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES**

The following guidelines provide the Member formal authority to obtain certain organizational resources and support he/she needs to assist peer employees:

- (a) Lodging and per diem expenses may be provided for training, workshop attendance and assignment referrals to a work location outside the Members currently assigned location. All such activity is subject to prior authorization by the Coordinator.
- (b) The Member is authorized to use department facilities to meet with employees.
- (c) The Member is permitted to consult with employees on duty. If the consultation is lengthy or the employee is in distress, the Member will advise the employee's immediate supervisor, if applicable.
- (d) Participation in the program is voluntary and no overtime or compensatory time will be authorized for time expended performing Member duties.

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#### **1011.5.3 CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is imperative that each Member maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual within the guidelines of this program.

Communication between the Member and a person is considered confidential except for matters which involve the following:

- (a) Danger to self.
- (b) Danger to others.
- (c) Suspected child abuse.
- (d) Narcotic offenses (sales or transportation).
- (e) Domestic violence.
- (f) Factual elderly abuse.
- (g) Where divulgence is requested by the peer.

Member assistance is not exempt from laws, rules, regulations, directive or orders; but any exchange of information not in violation of this statement will be confidential.

A general principle for Members to follow is to inform the person, prior to discussion, what the limitations and exceptions are regarding the information revealed. In those cases where a concern or a question regarding confidentiality arises, the Member must immediately contact the Coordinator or Counseling Team who will take appropriate action.

#### **1011.6 INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS**

It may occur that a Member is assisting an individual who is or becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation. The Member's role in disciplinary situations should be one of support and assisting individuals through the stress they may face during the disciplinary process. The Member should be guided by the confidentiality policy of the Peer Support Program. He should not volunteer any information received in confidence, however, Member may not hamper or impede the actual investigation, nor may they attempt to shelter the individual from the department's investigation. Department supervisors shall respect the confidentiality of the prior peer support conversations. If a Member is ordered by a supervisor to divulge information obtained during a peer support session that divulgence shall be ordered by the Chief of Police.

If Members have any questions or concerns regarding these situations, they should consult with the Coordinator or Commander for guidelines and assistance.

#### **1011.7 PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES**

The purpose of this section is to provide the Member with a summary of the guidelines to be followed when dealing with situations under field conditions. These guidelines are the basic tools for providing assistance. Used properly, they will help boost Member confidence and will reduce

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the risks of mismanaging emotional problems. For more detailed guidelines, the Member should refer to the material contained in the Peer Support Training Manual.

#### 1011.7.1 LISTENING

Listening techniques are fundamental to the use of all other interviewing skills. The purpose of effective listening includes:

- (a) Encouraging self-expression.
- (b) Allowing individual opportunity to direct the interview.
- (c) Giving individuals a sense of responsibility for what happens.
- (d) Helping individuals relax and be comfortable in the interview.
- (e) Fostering trust of the Member and a sense of security.
- (f) Enabling the Member to draw more accurate inferences about the individual.

#### 1011.7.2 ASSESSMENT

The process of making a judgment about the information gathered during the interview. Two primary factors must be considered. They are:

- (a) Assess whether the problem is one with which you can assist the person or one that should be referred to professional resources.
- (b) Assess whether the problem needs urgent attention.

#### 1011.7.3 REFERRAL

The process of directing the peer to the appropriate professional service(s) available.

#### 1011.7.4 FOLLOW UP

Once assessment and referrals have been made, the Member should monitor the individual's process, and provide follow-up assistance as needed.