

## LA MESA POLICE DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTION

### **ADMINISTRATION: Wellness Program – Peer Support/ BeSTOW**

**No: 116**

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Walt Vasquez, Chief of Police:

#### **I. PURPOSE**

The La Mesa Police Department recognizes the need to support, develop, and enhance the wellness of its employees throughout their careers in order for them to provide the highest quality of service and assistance to the community, while learning to take good care of themselves and each other. This need consists of providing an “in house” confidential and experienced resource for employees and their family members, to support them in managing both professional and personal crisis, as well as providing proactive emotional survival and wellness training for the mind, body, and spirit based upon the BeSTOW philosophy: Beyond Survival Toward Officer Wellness. (Refer to link for F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin article explaining the concepts of BeSTOW:

<http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/law-enforcement-bulletin/Dec2010/Focus on Training>

The purpose of this instruction is to establish policy related to a Department Wellness Program comprised of a Peer Support team. The Peer Support team consists of trusted and experienced Department colleagues, who act reactively when an employee needs assistance, as well as proactively to train and promote emotional survival and wellness practices. The Peer Support team works to assist employees to not only survive physically, but to thrive in over-all wellness, vitality, and service.

In addition to supporting Department employees, the Peer Support Team may be utilized to support the community in situations of critical incidents, such as school shootings, natural disasters, and other traumatic situations. The Peer Support Team may also be utilized to support other City departments and personnel, and should work in cooperation with peer support teams of other agencies and/or City departments in multi-agency and/or multi-department incidents.

Through developing the BeSTOW philosophy into training, the Peer Support team will develop proactive training and resources to address emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness issues and stress management concepts in order to enhance employees' overall wellness, effectiveness, and quality of service to the community.

## II. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the La Mesa Police Wellness Program is to provide support, assistance, training, and resources to assist Department employees and their families in managing professional and personal crisis as well as enhancing their mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness so that employees will be better prepared to more effectively process the stress and emotional trauma prevalent within our profession.

## III. ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT TEAM

Peer Support Team members provide support and assistance to employees in times of stress and crisis, as well as proactive training toward emotional survival. The responsibilities of a Peer Support Team member are as follows:

- A. Convey trust and anonymity, and assure confidentiality within the guidelines to employees who seek assistance from the Peer Support Program.
- B. Attend assigned Peer Support training seminars and mandatory meetings
- C. Provide assistance and support as needed
- D. Assist the employee by referring him/her to the appropriate resource when necessary
- E. Be available to employees for additional follow-up support
- F. Maintain contact with the Wellness Program Coordinator regarding Team activities
- G. Agree to be contacted and, if necessary, respond at any hour to assist an employee in need
- H. Coordinate employee & family events, picnics, and other activities to build a well rounded family support system for the Department's employees.
- I. Develop and provide proactive training and resources to promote emotional survival and the wellness of employees' minds, bodies, and spirits.

Generally, when an employee is on duty, meetings and follow up contacts by a Peer Support Team member will be coordinated with that employee's immediate supervisor. Consideration should be given to the employee's position, minimum-staffing levels, calls for service, and availability of the individual to attend meetings.

Peer Support personnel will be available to:

- A. Listen and talk with an employee after a critical incident or crisis;
- B. Provide information on resources available, such as the Employee Assistance Program, Alcoholics Anonymous, credit counseling, Chaplain, etc.;
- C. Conduct or assist supervisors in defusings;
- D. Conduct CISM debriefings;

- E. Respond to an employee's own request for Peer Support or a request from an employee regarding another;
- F. Provide peer support information to new employees;
- G. Conduct the new employee orientation/family orientation program;
- H. Provide pro-active training and resources to employees;

Personnel who may possibly be involved in conducting any criminal prosecution or administrative discipline shall avoid any conflict of interest which may arise by placing themselves in both a Peer Support and investigative role on the same incident.

In the role as a Peer Support person, a team member needs to refrain from discussing details of any on-duty incident that either is or is likely to be investigated as an Internal Affairs investigation. Peer Supporters are to offer their assistance and help, discuss the employee's emotions or troubles dealing with the issue, but not about the details of the issue.

Peer Support personnel shall also be available for support on any other incident at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

#### I. Police Academy Mentor

Another role for members of the Peer Support team is to be an Academy Mentor for police recruits to provide guidance and assistance throughout their time in the police academy. The Mentor will also provide information and additional resources to the recruit that are aimed at providing a foundation for the recruit to develop and practice physical, mental, and emotional survival and wellness techniques. The relationship between the Mentor and the recruit will be a professional relationship at all times and not personal. The Mentor will work in coordination with the Training Sergeant, who will continue to be the liaison between the Police Academy and the Department. The information provided to the recruit will be based upon the formal orientation and information provided through the Department Wellness Program (See section V). The Mentor will ensure the recruit understands the following:

1. Department resources available
2. Peer Support Program/ Department Wellness Program
3. P.O.A. information, role, and website
4. City Matrix information
5. Physical Fitness Program
6. Chaplain
7. BeSTOW philosophy of emotional survival

The Mentor should speak once per week with the recruit, and meet once per month, or as often as the Mentor deems appropriate.

Prior to the recruit's graduation, the Mentor should coordinate with the Training Sergeant to formally host the recruit and his/her family at the Police Department for a recognition ceremony that includes providing the recruit with resource material such as "Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement" and "I Love a Cop".

#### IV. BeSTOW PHILOSOPHY

The La Mesa Police Department recognizes that it is no longer viable to only train the mind and body. Each employee requires training of the three critical components that make them human and effective in public service; their mind, body, and spirit. Proactive training of an employee's spirit can help keep the employee motivated and inspired toward public service and can prepare them to constructively process the toxic effects of our profession to maintain wellness.

The objective of the BeSTOW philosophy is spiritual wellness, meaning the spirit is healthy and well; not depressed, suffering, crippled with PTSD or other emotional traumas and stress, cynical, or feeling hopeless and helpless.

The Peer Support team is to develop and maintain ways to enhance the emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness of employees while practicing to take better care of themselves and each other through recruitment to retirement. This is done by proactively training employees how to more effectively process the stress, trauma, and difficulties they face each day, as well as to learn how to remain motivated and inspired to protect and serve others in line with the true purpose of law enforcement; that of serving our community and each other with compassion, integrity, and honor. By providing proactive training and resources, all employees are encouraged to develop their own emotional wellness program that suits their emotional survival needs.

#### V. COMPOSITION

The La Mesa Police Wellness Program consists of the Peer Support Team incorporating the BeSTOW philosophy. The Peer Support team will be supervised by the Wellness Program Coordinator, who will be a lieutenant appointed by the Chief of Police. The activities of the Peer Support Team will be coordinated by a Team Leader.

The Peer Support team Leader will be selected by the Department Wellness Program Coordinator and may serve for a period of three years. The Team Leader may serve additional three-year periods based upon a recommendation by the Wellness Program Coordinator to the Chief of Police, who makes the final determination. The Team Leader will oversee the activities of the team and will report to the Department Wellness Coordinator, who will report directly to the Chief of Police.

The Chief of Police may appoint any qualified Department employee to the Peer Support team. Peer Support team members serve for a period of three years. Team members may serve additional three-year periods based upon a recommendation by the Wellness Program Coordinator to the Chief of Police, who makes the final determination.

Peer Support Team members will receive training in Peer Support for emergency responders, Critical Incidents, Post Trauma Stress, and Basic Critical Incident Stress Management.

Other training includes a basic orientation on the concepts of emotional and spiritual wellness issues and practices, as well as periodic instruction based upon the training of the F.B.I. National Academy course “Spirituality, Wellness, and Vitality Issues in Law Enforcement Practices” provided by the Wellness Program Coordinator or his/her designee. Additional suggested training could include interpersonal communication, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, addictions, or other related topics.

Members of the Peer Support team must remain in good standing in order to continue to participate in the Wellness Program. A team member may be removed from the team based upon a recommendation by the Wellness Coordinator to the Chief of Police, who makes the final determination. Circumstances that could cause a team member to be removed from the team include, but are not limited to:

- A. Disclosing any confidential information or conversations
- B. Numerous unexcused absences from mandatory meetings
- C. Repeated non-participation in functions when called upon

## VI. CRITICAL INCIDENTS REQUIRING A PEER SUPPORT RESPONSE

Critical incidents that require a Peer Support response shall include, but are not limited to:

- A. All shootings where a suspect is killed or wounded;
- B. Where an employee witnesses another employee’s death or serious injury;
- C. Where an employee is taken hostage;
- D. Where an employee is witness to a suicide;
- E. Where an employee is witness to a violent death or serious injury;
- F. Infant/child death;
- G. Where an employee is a witness or a participant to an incident involving multiple deaths;
- H. Any incident that is likely to affect the employee’s ability to interact with the public and carry out their job functions;

- I. Any other incident deemed appropriate by the Police Department Watch Commander.

Defusings and/or more detailed debriefings will be conducted as soon as practical after a critical incident. Supervisors will conduct a defusing as soon as practical after an incident. Debriefings should occur within 24–72 hours after the critical incident and will be conducted by CISM qualified personnel. Attendance at debriefings shall be mandatory for all employees involved in the critical incident.

A defusing immediately follows (as soon as practical) the critical event and generally lasts no more than an hour. Staff may be present to offer support. A defusing may eliminate the need for a formal debriefing or it may enhance the formal debriefing process. The Peer Support Team Leader will decide on the need for a formal debriefing after consulting with the Wellness Program Coordinator.

A debriefing typically happens 24–72 hours after the end of the critical event. It is mandatory for all personnel involved. One certified CISM mental health professional and 2-3 peer support members are required to conduct a debriefing. A chaplain is optional but is highly recommended. The debriefing will be conducted following the “Mitchell Model.” The debriefing may last 2-4 hours.

## VII. CONFIDENTIALITY

The acceptance and success of the Peer Support Team will be determined, in part, by strict observance of confidentiality. It is imperative that each Peer Support Team member maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual within the guidelines of this program.

All conversations between Peer Support personnel and employees are not privileged under the Evidence Code. The Department will respect the confidentiality of conversations between Peer Support personnel and employees, with the following exceptions:

- A. Information concerning the commission of a crime;
- B. The employee is a danger to themselves or an immediate danger to others.

Disclosures under this exception will be made directly to the Chief of Police where any Department member is involved.

A general principle for Peer Supporters 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 question regarding confidentiality arises, the Peer Supporter should consult with the Team Leader.

## VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

Employees may be appointed to serve on the Peer Support Team by the Chief of Police as a collateral duty, after first being recommended by the Wellness Coordinator. There are two ways in which an employee may be recommended for appointment to the Chief of Police: 1) The Wellness Coordinator recruits the employee and ascertains their interest, motivation, experience, and history of trust and respectability or: 2) The employee meets with the Wellness Coordinator and requests to be recommended for appointment to the Peer Support team. Not all persons requesting to be recommended to the Chief will be recommended or appointed. Recommendations and appointment considerations will be based upon the room on the team for new members, as well as the employee's motivation, experience, interest, and perceived trust, respectability, and dependability. Other considerations include:

- A. Are not on probation at the time of appointment
- B. Agree to maintain confidentiality as provided in this D.I.
- C. Be empathetic and possess effective interpersonal and communication skills
- D. Be motivated and genuinely concerned with the well-being of all fellow employees
- E. Successful review of the individual's background and Department personnel file
- F. Must be willing to attend and successfully complete training programs
- G. Must attend meetings held at least quarterly
- H. May be called out after hours to respond to a critical event

With the approval of the Wellness Coordinator, the Wellness Coordinator will submit a memo of recommendation to the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police has the authority whether or not to appoint an employee to the Peer Support team, based upon the above criteria.

## IX. PEER SUPPORT TRAINING

Peer Support Team Members should receive training in the following areas:

- A. Effective listening
- B. Critical incident stress management
- C. Debriefing and diffusing techniques
- D. Post traumatic stress
- E. Problem-solving skills
- F. Relationship termination
- G. General assessment skills
- H. Referral and follow-up
- I. Emotional Survival
- J. Stress management

#### K. Suicide awareness and prevention

The members should attend a “Basic Peer Support” class and a “Basic Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) class as soon as practical, followed by attendance at an “Advanced Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) class at an appropriate time. In addition, the California Peer Support Association offers a training conference each year. A selected number of members may be budgeted to attend each year. Those in attendance shall provide training for team members unable to attend.

Peer supporters should attend on-going training to remain up to date on procedures and knowledge on available assistance for peers.

#### X. PEER SUPPORT ATTIRE

At all Peer Support “call-outs”, functions, and events, casual business attire (dockers/polo shirt) will be worn. Exceptions can be made by the Team Leader. The optional Peer Support polo shirt may be worn at functions, events, and “call-outs.” The Peer Support “call-out” jacket may be worn at “call-outs”.

#### XI. REPORTING

Peer Support members may be required to complete a monthly report on all Peer Support activities or events. The monthly report will not reflect any names or confidential issues.

#### XII. NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION PROGRAM

All new employees will be given a Peer Support team introduction and a Peer Support informational packet. All new employees will participate in the Department’s family orientation program. Depending on the number of new employees, the orientation will be given as a group or one-on-one presentation.

#### XIII. CHAPLAIN PROGRAM

La Mesa Police Department recognizes that in times of trauma, crisis, and emotional turmoil resulting from the cumulative toxic effects of our chosen profession, it is often important to be able to offer a spiritual component to employees. Accordingly, the Department may include qualified members of the clergy as volunteers in the Department Wellness Program who also serve on the Peer Support Team as Police Chaplains. The Chaplains follow the same chain of command as Peer Support Team members.

The Chaplain program is intended to be a resource to the Department and the Wellness Program Team members. Chaplains’ duties include, but are not limited to:



- A. Officiate at Department events;
- B. Officiate at Department funerals;
- C. Conduct or participate in CISM debriefings;
- D. Attend line-ups and ride-along with personnel;
- E. Provide pastoral support and confidential counsel to Department employees when needed;
- F. Respond to an employee's request for Peer Support or spiritual support;
- G. Assist with annual new employee orientation;
- H. Work within the Peer Support and BeSTOW teams;
- I. Furnish referral or resource assistance;
- J. Be called to the scene of a traumatic incident, or to provide assistance in death or serious injury notifications;
- K. Counsel Department employees and their families undergoing stressful situations;
- L. Visit sick or injured Department employees;
- M. Organize and conduct events designed to enhance morale and the well-being of Department members and their families;

Chaplain personnel shall also be available for support on any other incident at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

#### XIV. CHAPLAIN SELECTION PROCESS

Potential Chaplain candidates shall be residents of San Diego County and have an interest in volunteering for the La Mesa Police Department. Prospective candidates will be interviewed by at least two members of the Peer Support Team and a recommendation will be made to the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police will approve and appoint all Chaplains. Chaplains will be chosen based on their ability to:

- A. Complete and pass a background check
- B. Maintain confidentiality
- C. Be empathetic and possess interpersonal and communication skills
- D. Be motivated to support employees in stressful and/or traumatic situations
- E. Appropriately serve a diverse employee and community population
- F. Willingness to be called out after hours to respond to a critical incident

#### XV. CHAPLAIN TRAINING

Chaplains shall possess training and credentials certifying their position and training as a member of the clergy. Further education in critical incident stress management is helpful. The following course work is recommended for chaplains. These classes are offered through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

- A. Individual Intervention and Peer Support
- B. Pastoral Crisis Intervention
- C. Group Crisis Intervention
- D. Pastoral Intervention II
- E. Advanced Group Crisis Intervention

XV. CHAPLAIN ATTIRE

Police Chaplains will generally wear “Peer Support Attire” as described in Section X, except as directed by the Peer Support Team Leader or Wellness Program Coordinator. At functions where sworn personnel are in Class A uniforms the Police Chaplains shall wear business attire or the Class A uniform as described in R&R 6.06.01 with the exception of subsection G. The Police Chaplain shall get approval through their chain of command prior to donning the Class A uniform.

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