

# **PALM SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## **PEER SUPPORT GUIDELINES**

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### **Palm Springs Police Department Peer Support Program Introduction**

Almost everyone has experienced, 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 Palm Springs Police Department employee.

This handbook has three specific objectives:

1. It provides a background for understanding the department's Peer Support Program;
2. It provides practical guidelines for management of the program
3. It provides the Peer Support Advisors with guidelines for assisting their peers.

This handbook 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 Peer Support Advisor to assist persons who are faced with stressful situations. Each Peer Support Advisor 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 Peer Support Advisors shall be required to keep open lines of communication to facilitate this maturation process. Effective, honest communication in a caring environment, balanced by the program protocol, will greatly enhance the opportunity for a successful program.

# Palm Springs Police Department's Peer Support Program

## Section I

### Unit 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 assistance is confidential, providing it does not violate any law or department regulation.

This program is designed to:

- \* Provide emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to employees who express a need for assistance.
- \* Promote trust, allow appropriate anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons using Peer Support Advisors within the guidelines of the program.
- \* Develop Advisors who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance or referral to professional\alternate resources as required.
- \* Maintain an effective peer support training and response program.
- \* Support those who have had family tragedies.
- \* Check on status of illnesses and IOD's and provide support where desired and needed.

#### PURPOSE

The Palm Springs Police Department's most valuable resource is its employees. The Palm Springs 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 been nominated by their peers and have volunteered to make themselves available to any member of the department.

This program will provide a way for the Palm Springs Police Department employees to talk out personal and\or professional problems confidentially with someone who understands and cares.

The purpose of this program is as follows:

- ° Develop Peer Advisor volunteers who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance or referrals to professional resources as required.
- ° Provide emotional support during and after times of personal and/or professional crisis to employees who express a need for assistance.
- ° Support employees and their families during tragedies or critical incidents and make proper referrals to professional resources.
- ° Check on employees who are off work due to extended illness or injury and provide support for those who express the need. Unit 2 - Duties and Responsibilities

#### Duties of Peer Support Program Coordinator

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

The duties of the Peer Support Program Coordinator are as follows:

- \* Be responsible for supervising the program on a daily basis.
- \* Recommend Peer Support Advisors to the Chief of Police.
- \* Conduct training meetings to ensure competency of Peer Support Advisors.
- \* Authorize compensation of Peer Support Advisors, if warranted.
- \* Assign Peer Support Advisors to critical incidents.
- \* Ensure compliance with department policy and direct the program=s operation.
- \* Recruiter and coordinate the screening of the Peer Support applicants.
- \* Ensure resources are met and Peer Support Advisors are following up on any outside referrals that have been made.
- \* Offering guidance and developing resources to Peer Support Advisors when problems occur.

#### Duties of Peer Support Advisors

The Peer Support Advisor provides support and assistance to employees in time of stress and crisis. The Peer Support Advisor=s responsibilities are as follows:

- \* Convey trust, anonymity and assure confidentiality within policy guidelines to employees who seek assistance from the Peer Support Program.
- \* Provide assistance and support to peers on a voluntary basis.
- \* Assist the employee(s) by referring him\her to the appropriate and viable referral resource when necessary.
- \* Be available to the individual for follow-up support.
- \* Maintain contact with the Program Coordinator and submit monthly statistical information.
- \* Peer Support Advisor will agree to be contacted and, if practical, respond at any hour.
- \* Contacting of IOD=s on a weekly basis.
- \* Contacting retiree=s within their first year of retirement on a bi-monthly basis.

The Peer Support Advisor 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.

#### Duties of Peer Support Secretary

The appointed Peer Support Secretary shall be responsible for:

- \* Maintaining only statistical data of reported contacts by peers and peer supporters.
- \* Maintaining an accounting of resources used by the program.

#### Duties of Peer Support Training Coordinator

The appointed Peer Support Training Coordinator shall be responsible for:

- \* Meeting with the Peer Support Coordinator for the ongoing training of Peer Support Advisors.

### Unit 3

#### Peer Support Selection Process

When the department determines a need for new advisors, the Peer Support Coordinator will be responsible for distributing a survey to all employees. Any member of the Palm Springs Police Department may submit the name of a peer on an Employee

Report Form #PSC001 through any Peer Support Advisor or the Peer Support Coordinator for consideration as a peer supporter. The form will ask employees to list peers with whom they would feel comfortable talking about personal or family difficulties.

The Peer Support Coordinator and Peer Support Advisors will review the list, interview and explain the program to the top candidates. At the conclusion of the interview, qualified candidates names are submitted to the Chief of Police for final approval.

Prospective Peer Support Advisors must be willing to meet the following criteria:

- \* Agree to maintain confidentiality within the guidelines provided in this handbook.
- \* Be empathetic and possess interpersonal and communication skills.
- \* Be motivated and willing to manage time effectively. This will allow minimal impact on their normal duties.
- \* Must successfully complete the selection process.
- \* Must attend and successfully complete the training program.

Any peer may seek support from any of the named advisors and do not have to stay within their work groups.

Confidentiality: The goal is to maintain confidentiality between Peer Support Advisors and peers. The acceptance and success of the program is in part based on maintaining strict confidentiality of all information learned by a Peer Support Advisor that falls within the guidelines of the program.

Communication between a Peer Support Advisor and peer employee is considered confidential except in the following circumstances:

- \* Peer is a danger to self or others.
- \* Suspected child abuse.
- \* Factual information supporting elder abuse.
- \* Domestic violence.
- \* Sales or transportation of narcotics/dangerous drugs.
- \* Cases in which the law requires divulgence.
- \* Peer gives consent for divulgence.

Internal Affairs Investigations: The Peer Support Advisor=s role in disciplinary situations is one of support and assistance to the peer during the disciplinary process. The Advisor is guided by the confidentiality policy and will not volunteer any information. Advisors may not hamper, impede or shelter the peer from the actual investigation. The Department investigators and supervisors shall respect the confidential conversations between Advisors and peers. The Chief of Police shall have the authority to deviate from the confidentiality policy during an internal affairs investigation.

Peer Support Advisor Assignment and Removal: Peer Support Advisors are appointed by the Chief of Police upon recommendation from the Peer Support Coordinator. Peer Support Advisors agree to volunteer their time and if practical, respond at any hour. There may be overtime authorized for support duties with the Coordinator=s approval.

Peer Support Advisors may withdraw from participation at any time after notifying the Coordinator. Advisors will be removed from the program for conduct inconsistent with policy and procedure. Negative job performance caused by Peer Support Advisor duties must be reported by the Peer Support Advisor's supervisor to the Peer Support Coordinator for discussion and resolution.

Critical Incident Call Outs: A critical incident is a sudden event, such as a shooting, mass casualty event, injuries or death to co-workers or civilians, that generates profound emotions.

The watch commander will assess, if a debriefing is necessary, and contact the Peer Support Program Coordinator. The Coordinator will assign a Peer Support Advisor. If the Peer Support Advisor determines that the Counseling Team should be involved, the Advisor will inform the Watch Commander or Coordinator who will contact the Counseling Team.

Peer Support Advisors called out by the department for critical incidents shall be compensated according the Memorandum of Understanding.

#### Peer Support Training Program

The training program will be coordinated by the Peer Support Training Coordinator. The major emphasis will focus on skill development for conducting peer assistance.

The main areas covered include:

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

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

### Organization Resources

The following guidelines provide the Peer Support Advisor=s formal authority to obtain certain organizational resources and support he\she needs to assist peer employees:

- \* The Peer Support Advisor is authorized to use department facilities to meet with employee, with appropriate prior approval as necessary. California Peer Support Assn. - Basic Peer Support Class 27
- \* The Peer Support Advisor is permitted to consult with employees on duty with approval from the peer supporter's immediate supervisor. No names or personal identifiers will be given to the supervisor.
- \* Participation in the program is voluntary; however, Peer Support Advisors called out by the department for critical incidents shall be compensated according the Memorandum of Understanding. (Further, if a Peer Support Advisor is called out and is held over to their next scheduled shift, the Peer Support Advisor=s immediate supervisor may approve the time spent advising/supporting, in lieu of their next regularly scheduled work shift.)

### **Unit 4 - Confidentiality**

The acceptance and success of the Palm Springs Police Department's Peer Support Program will be determined, in part, by observance of confidentiality. It is imperative that each Peer Support Advisor maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual within the guidelines of this program.

The policy of the Palm Springs Police Department=s Peer Support Program is to maintain the confidentiality. Communication between the Peer Support Advisor and a person is considered confidential except for matters which involve the following:

- \* Danger to self.
- \* Danger to others.
- \* Suspected child abuse.
- \* Narcotic offenses (sales or transportation).
- \* Domestic violence.
- \* Factual elderly abuse.
- \* In cases where law requires divulgence.



\* Where divulgence is requested by the peer.

A general principle for Peer Support Advisors 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 Peer Support Advisor must immediately contact the Program Coordinator, who will take appropriate action. California Peer Support Assn. - Basic Peer Support Class 28

## Field Management of the Peer Support Program

### Section II

#### Unit 5 - Discipline

##### Internal Investigations

It may occur that a Peer Support Advisor is assisting an individual who is or becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation. The Peer Support Advisor should be guided by the confidentiality policy of the Peer Support Program. He/She should not volunteer any information received in confidence; however, Advisors may not hamper or impede the actual investigation, nor may they attempt to shelter the individual from the department's investigation.

The Peer Support Advisor's role in disciplinary situations is one of support and assistance to the peer during the stress they may face during the disciplinary process. If Peer Support Advisors have any questions or concerns regarding these situations, they should consult with the Program Coordinator for guidance and assistance.

The Peer Support Advisor is guided by the confidentiality policy and will not volunteer any information. The Department investigators and supervisors shall respect the confidential conversations between Advisors and peers. The Chief of Police shall have the authority to deviate from the confidentiality policy during an internal affairs investigation.

#### Unit 6

##### Peer Support Program Skills and Techniques

The purpose of this section is to provide the Peer Support Advisor 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 California Peer Support Assn. - Basic Peer Support Class 29

Peer Support Advisor confidence and will reduce the risks of mismanaging emotional problems. For more detailed guidelines, the Peer Support Advisor should refer to the

material contained in the Peer Support Training Manual provided to you by the A Counseling Team.

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

- \* Encouraging self-expression.
- \* Allowing individual opportunity to direct the interview.
- \* Giving individuals a sense of responsibility for what happens.
- \* Helping individuals relax and be comfortable in the interview.
- \* Fostering trust of the peer supporter and a sense of security.
- \* Enabling the Peer Support Advisor to draw more accurate inferences about the individual.

2. Assessment - The process of making a judgment about the information gathered during the interview. Several factors must be considered. They are:

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

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

4. Follow-up B Once assessment and referrals have been made, the Peer Support Advisor should monitor the individual's process, and provide follow-up assistance as needed