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## Peer Support and Assistance Program (CISM)

### 1060.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Tuff Services Ministries recognizes the value of providing Critical Incident Stress Management and Debriefing resources for First Responders, Military, their family members, as well as the overall Nevada community, to support them in managing both professional and personal crisis. The purpose of this policy is to establish a Peer Support and Assistance-Critical Incident Stress Management Program and implementation of a Peer Support Team.

The Peer Support Team may 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. The Peer Support Team may also be utilized to support the community in situations of critical incidents, such as school shootings, natural disasters, etc.

#### 1060.1.1 DEFINITION

The Peer Support Program is a program that offers assistance and appropriate support resources to our Nevada community when personal or professional problems negatively affect their work performance, family unit or self. This communication is confidential, providing it does not violate any state law, Community or Departmental regulation. This program is designed to:

- (a) Provide emotional support (debriefing) during and after times of personal or professional crisis to individuals 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

### 1060.2 MISSION STATEMENT

The role of the Tuff Services Ministries Peer Support Team is to be available to listen, support, refer, and assist affected individuals and their family members during professional or personal, stressful, or difficult periods in their lives.

#### 1060.2.1 ACCESSING PEER SUPPORT

The Peer Support Team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to community members as needed. There are Peer Support Team brochures available that explain the resources, tools and guidance provided and support for individuals and groups with peer support team contact information included.

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#### **1060.2.2 POLICY**

The Peer support Team is intended to be a resource available to the overall community in the event of a critical incident or crisis situation. Peer Support personnel will be available to:

- (a) Listen to another individual's feelings after a critical incident or crisis situation;
- (b) Facilitate or assist in diffusing critical incidents;
- (c) Respond to an individual or group request for peer support or assistance;
- (d) Conduct Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefings;
- (e) Provide information on other resources available (Emotional Spiritual Support, Alcoholics Anonymous, Clinical Counseling/Coaching, Financial Guidance, etc);
- (f) Provide Peer Support orientation to Community Organizations as needed/requested

Tuff Services Ministries Peer Support personnel may be utilized to support the community in critical incident situations. Examples would be school shootings, natural disasters, etc.

#### **1060.2.3 CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

A "critical incident" is any event that causes an unusually intense stress reaction. The distress people experience after a critical incident limits their ability to cope, impairs their ability to adjust, and negatively impacts the work environment.

Critical Incidents that may require a Peer Support response may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Officer involved shootings, unpreventable fire involved deaths, drownings or vehicle accidents;
- (b) Where an individual or group witnesses another community members death or serious injury;
- (c) Where an individual or group is taken hostage;
- (d) Where an individual or group is a witness to a suicide;
- (e) Where an individual or group is a witness to a violent death or serious injury;
- (f) Infant/child death;
- (g) Any incident that is likely to affect the individual's ability to interact with the public and carry out their daily job functions;

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#### **1060.2.4 DEBRIEFING/DIFUSING**

Debriefings and defusing will be conducted by Peer support personnel as soon as practical after a critical incident. Debriefings should occur within 24-72 hours after the critical incident and will be conducted by qualified personnel. Attendance at debriefings is highly recommended for all individuals involved in the critical incident.

A defusing immediately follows the critical event and generally lasts no longer than one hour. It gives all parties involved in the incident, the "big picture" of what occurred. It gives involved individual's a reminder about exercise, what foods to eat, to drink plenty of water and to know their thoughts are normal. Peer Support Team members may be present to give assistance and support. A defusing may eliminate the need for a formal debriefing or it may enhance the formal debriefing process. The Peer Support Coordinator and Program Advisor will decide on the need for a formal debriefing.

One certified CISM mental health professional and two to three Peer Support Team members are required to conduct a debriefing. A Chaplain is optional but is highly recommended. The debriefing may last two to six hours.

#### **1060.3 CONFIDENTIALITY**

The acceptance and success of the Tuff Services Ministries Peer Support and Assistance Program will be determined in part by the observance of confidentiality. It is imperative each Peer Support Team Member maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual within the guidelines of this program.

All conversations between the Tuff Services Ministries Peer Support personnel and the individual are held as confidential and with strict confidence, unless it is felt the individual may become a harm to themselves or others and at that point may be reported to authorities.

#### **1060.3.1 TEAM STRUCTURE**

The Peer Support Program will fall under the quality assurance division of Tuff Services Ministries for full accountability purposes.

**Program Coordinators** - The Program Coordinator (s) should be those either licensed or certified with the knowledge of Psychological First Aid, Trauma Intervention, Disaster Management, etc. The Program Coordinators shall be responsible for the Peer Support Program and coordination of the Peer Support Team.

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**Senior Program Manager** - the senior program manager should be either a licensed or be board certified in Mental Health Coaching/Counseling, certifications in Suicide Ideation, Grief and Loss, Psychological First Aid, Trauma Intervention, Disaster Management, CPR/AED, etc. and are responsible for:

- (a) Assist in training and selection of Peer Support Team Members;
- (b) Provide continued training in the techniques of Peer counseling;
- (c) Provide guidance at debriefings.

**Peer Support Team Members** - Peer Support Team Members shall be selected based on background, skill, experience and education, from several community sources at large.

#### **1060.4 ROLE OF PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS**

Peer Support Team Members provide support and assistance to individual's in times of stress and crisis. The responsibilities of a Peer Support Team Member are as follows:

- (a) Convey trust and anonymity and assure confidentiality within the policy to individuals or groups who seek assistance from the Peer Support Program;
- (b) Attend assigned Peer Support training seminars;
- (c) Provide assistance, guidance and support;
- (d) Assist the individual by referring them to the appropriate outside resource when necessary;
- (e) Be available to individuals or groups for additional follow-up support;
- (f) Maintain contact with the Program Coordinators regarding program activities;
- (g) Attend quarterly meetings;
- (h) Agree to be contacted and if necessary, respond at any hour to assist an individual in need.

#### **1060.5 PAY AND COMPENSATION**

It is fully understood and acknowledged that the members of the Tuff Services Ministries Peer Support Team are volunteers and there is no financial compensation involved (unless otherwise provided by private organizations, individuals, specific contracts, grants, etc.) for their services, effort and time. There are also strict guidelines preventing any conflict of interest or unethical business practices involved to create financial gain in working with individuals or groups for current or future financial opportunities.

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### **1060.6 TRAINING**

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

- (a) Effective listening;
- (b) Critical incident stress;
- (c) Debriefing and defusing techniques;
- (d) Post traumatic stress and trauma;
- (e) Problem-solving skills;
- (f) Relationship termination;
- (g) General assessment skills;
- (h) Referral follow-up.
- (i) Grief and Loss
- (j) Psychological First Aid

The suggested minimum training is:

- (a) 24 Hour Basic Peer Support Courses;
- (b) Basic Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) course;
- (c) National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA) Basic Crisis Response Training
- (d) Any additional training as deemed necessary by the Senior Program Coordinators or Program Advisors.

In addition, The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (ICISF) offers an abundance of trainings and an annual conference. A selected number of members may be budgeted to attend each year. Those in attendance shall provide training for team members unable to attend.

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