



Policy 1711

Subject	
PEER SUPPORT TEAM	
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By Order of the Police Commissioner

POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance on the responsibilities and expectations of Peer Support Team members and those involved with the peer support process. The Baltimore Police Department's (BPD) Peer Support Team consists of trained sworn and civilian BPD personnel who support members by providing assistance in the areas of personal and group debriefing, anonymous and confidential peer counseling and resilience training.

DEFINITIONS

Critical Incident – An incident that is unusual, violent, and/or involves a perceived threat to or actual loss of human life that may overwhelm an individual's normal coping mechanisms and cause psychological distress (See Policy 1731, *Critical Incident Stress Management Protocol*).

Critical Incident Stress Management – A formal process used to assist an individual who has been involved in a traumatic or Critical Incident to return to and maintain an effective level of functioning.

Peer Mentor – An individual, sworn or civilian member of the Department, who has received training in Critical Incident Stress Management and who has been designated and trained to provide emotional, social, practical, and moral support to a BPD member. A Peer Support Member is not a counselor nor a therapist, but is trained to recognize and refer cases that require professional intervention, or are beyond their scope of training, to a mental health professional through the BPD's Employee Assistance Program (See Policy 1703, *Employee Assistance Program*). In addition to Critical Incident Stress Management and referral training, Peer Mentors are trained to provide day-to-day emotional support for members.

Peer Support Team – The Peer Support Team consists of a Team Coordinator, Peer Mentors, and a Mental Health Professional who responds to Critical Incidents or at a member's request.

Psychological Services Provider – Consists of a staff of psychologists, social workers, clinicians, and/or licensed mental health practitioners who have no role in fitness for duty evaluations.

Team Coordinator – The Peer Support Team member designated by the Director, Officer Safety & Wellness Section, who is assigned with the primary oversight and administrative functions of the Peer Support Team.

GENERAL

1. The Peer Support Team is under the direction and supervision of the Officer Safety and Wellness Section.
2. The Peer Support Team shall not be used as an investigative tool, disciplinary measure, or otherwise involved in any on-going criminal or internal investigations.
3. This Policy is not intended to interfere in any way with the voluntary use of or referral to any other related programs or services such as the Department's EAP (See Policy 1703, *Employee Assistance Program*). Member participation and involvement with the Peer Support Team is strictly voluntary.

DIRECTIVES**Peer Support Team Response and Notification**

1. The Peer Support Team shall be notified by Communications to respond in the event of a Critical Incident (See Policy 1731, *Critical Incident Stress Management Protocol*).
2. Any member may request contact with a Peer Mentor for individual support any time when experiencing stressors not related to a Critical Incident (e.g., death of a family member, financial hardship, or work stressors). The Peer Support Team may consult with members while on duty.
3. A supervisor or member may request the Peer Support Team to respond to any situation that may not rise to a Critical Incident, but may have an adverse impact on affected personnel.

Confidentiality and Responsibility

1. Communications between Peer Support Members and members seeking their consultation or guidance shall be considered confidential.
 - 1.1. Unless approved by the member seeking consultation, Peer Mentors shall not maintain counseling notes, record conversations, or divulge any details of counseling discussions.
 - 1.2. Except in the instances provided in 1.3. of this section, Peer Mentors may not disclose or be compelled to disclose counseling communications in any judicial, administrative, or other proceeding.
 - 1.3. Communications by the involved member that disclose violations of the law, Departmental policy, or serious misconduct will not be considered confidential, and will be forwarded to the Public Integrity Bureau (PIB). Peer Mentors are obligated to report an involved member's intention to inflict imminent physical injury to themselves or others when indicated by speech, conduct, or writing. Matters involving a threat to self or others will be immediately referred to the EAP or proper authorities, as necessary.
2. Allegations of Peer Mentor confidentiality violations shall result in the immediate suspension of the member's operational status as a Team member until issue resolution and/or other disciplinary action. Members will face disciplinary action for any confidentiality violations that occur while a member of the team or after the member's tenure with the Team.

REQUIRED ACTION**Peer Support Team Members**

1. Personnel approved to become Peer Mentors are required to successfully complete formal training approved by the Education & Training (E&T) Section prior to serving as a Peer Mentor.
2. Upon appointment to the Peer Support Team, Peer Mentors shall sign a Terms and Conditions Agreement (See Appendix A) that describes the confidentiality requirements of their duties as a Peer Mentor, and their duty to report misconduct, violations of law or Departmental policy, and/or threats to self or others if discovered during consultations.
3. Peer Mentors shall notify the Peer Support Team Coordinator immediately of any issues that may impair or affect their ability to operate as a Peer Support Member (e.g., personal critical incident, conflict of interest with a member seeking counseling, personal or professional issues that preclude them from assuming Peer Mentor duties, etc.).
4. When responding to Peer Support Team on-scene activations, or requests for consultation, Peer Mentors shall avoid direct involvement in the incident and shall focus instead on assisting the involved member.
5. Peer Mentors will be suspended from the Team pending adjudication of misconduct violations including severe allegations, ethics investigations, criminal charges, or other violations at the discretion of the Team Coordinator.

Peer Support Team Coordinator

The Peer Support Team Coordinator shall be responsible for:

1. Monitoring Peer Mentors to ensure that:
 - 1.1. Peer Mentors maintain their regular duties, remain eligible for team participation, and comply with the procedures set forth in this policy and training.
 - 1.2. Peer Mentors are not emotionally overwhelmed by the scope of their duties. This includes the establishment of a peer and professional support apparatus, to include periodic wellness checks, within the team itself.
2. Scheduling and ensuring Peer Mentor attendance at all initial and on-going training opportunities for new and current members.
3. Coordinating a Psychological Services Provider, who is not associated with any fitness for duty evaluation, to support the Team.
4. Managing the administrative and logistical functions of the Team, to include:
 - 4.1. Maintaining an on-call schedule and forwarding it to the Communications Section,
 - 4.2. Timely notification of scheduled meetings and training to Peer Support Members via their chain of command, and

- 4.3. Providing general administrative and oversight functions, including tracking overtime and managing the distribution of deployments.
5. Submitting a semi-annual report to the Director, Officer Safety & Wellness Section. This report shall be used only for administrative and planning purposes, and shall not reference or include any personally identifying information obtained during a peer support contact. The report shall consist of the:
 - 5.1. Number of Peer Support Members,
 - 5.2. Number of critical incident call-outs,
 - 5.3. Number of support and guidance contacts,
 - 5.4. Number of wellness trainings provided to the Team,
 - 5.5. Total number of Peer Support Team man hours expended upon activation, and
 - 5.6. Budget that includes expenditures on overtime, training, and/or equipment.

Team Selection

1. The Peer Support Team shall be composed of BPD members, sworn and civilian, who maintain their normal duties, and a Psychological Service Provider. In order to be selected as a Peer Mentor, BPD members will possess:
 - 1.1. Excellent listening and interpersonal skills,
 - 1.2. The respect and confidence of command and/or subordinates in the Department, and
 - 1.3. A disciplinary history that does not include misrepresentation of facts or any other conduct that would indicate that a member is unfit to serve as a Peer Mentor. Applicants must be in non-probationary status and be a member in good standing with BPD.
2. In addition to other requirements, all prospective Peer Support Members are subject to and must pass an oral interview by a board composed of the Peer Support Team Coordinator and one active member of the Peer Support Team.
3. Individuals selected through this process shall attend training after they have agreed to, and signed, a terms and conditions agreement. This training must be completed prior to the member officially joining the Peer Support Team.
4. Peer Support Members will be identified by a Peer Support Team pin which will be affixed to their uniform blouse, or on the member's outer garment.

Training

1. All training shall be approved by E&T and provided by recognized professional organizations and individuals working in the Critical Incident Stress Management field.
2. Team meetings and trainings shall be conducted on an ongoing and regular basis.

APPENDIX

- A. Peer Mentor Terms and Conditions Agreement

ASSOCIATED POLICIES

Policy 1703, *Employee Assistance Program*

Policy 1731, *Critical Incident Stress Management*

COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This policy is effective on the date listed herein. Each employee is responsible for complying with the contents of this policy.

APPENDIX A

Peer Mentor Terms and Conditions Agreement

Peer Support Member Terms and Conditions

On this ____ (day), of _____ (month), _____ (year), I _____, acknowledge and agree to abide by the following Agreement which sets forth the terms of my participation in the BPD Peer Support Program.

____ I agree to perform my role as a Peer Support Team member in accordance with BPD policies, including specifically Policy 1711 (which may be periodically amended), any protocols or guidance issued by the Officer Safety and Wellness Section (“OSW”), and the direction of the OSW and OSW-appointed clinician.

____ I agree to respond to traumatic incidents, critical incidents, or other incidents as directed by the OSW.

____ I agree to provide emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to other members who request assistance, in accordance with the Peer Support Program.

____ I agree to promote trust, allow appropriate anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons utilizing the Peer Support Program, within the guidelines of the program, law, and BPD policy.

____ I understand that maintaining the confidentiality is paramount and a requirement of the program. I agree to keep confidential all communications and information I may receive in my role as a Peer Support Team member, subject only to the following exceptions:

- Peer is a danger to himself or herself
- Peer is a danger to others
- Other cases where law or BPD policy requires disclosure
- Where requested by the Peer

____ I agree to attend all mandated trainings and maintain all required certifications.

____ I understand that, if I violate the law, any BPD policy, or any directive of the OSW concerning my conduct as a Peer Support Team member, I may be subject to prosecution, disciplinary action and/or removal from the Peer Support Program.

Member, Print name/seq.

Director, Officer Safety & Wellness

Member Signature

Peer Support Team Coordinator