



Iowa State University Department of Public Safety

Directive: 1.7

SUBJECT: PEER SUPPORT TEAM

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POLICY:

The department will provide all public safety employees and their immediate families within the department the opportunity for peer support through times of personal or professional crises and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties.

DEFINITIONS:

“Peer Support Provider,” sworn or non-sworn is a specially trained colleague, not a counselor or therapist. Peer Support Providers (PSPs) augment the Employee Assistance Program but do not replace it. PSPs will refer cases that require professional intervention to a mental health professional.

“Employee” means any full-time employee of the Department of Public Safety, including Parking, Risk Management, and Police.

PROCEDURE:

1.7.1 PEER SUPPORT TEAM

The following shall govern the department’s Peer Support Team (PST) procedures:

- A. The Captain of Investigative & Threat Management Services will oversee the program.
- B. PSPs will have a mental health professional with whom to consult regarding their Peer Support role. PSPs should be aware of their personal limitations. They should seek advice and counsel in determining when to disqualify themselves from working with problems for which they have not been trained or problems about which they may have strong personal beliefs.
- C. PSPs will not share information about members they support unless there are immediate safety concerns. The only information that management may require about peer support cases is the anonymous statistical information regarding the utilization of a PSP.
- D. PSPs must inform department members of the limits of their confidentiality. These should be consistent with the law as well as departmental policy and may include the following; threats to self, threats to others, felonies or serious misdemeanors as specified by the department, child, spouse, and elder abuse.
- E. PSPs must not volunteer information to supervisors and should advise supervisors of the confidentiality guidelines established by the department.
- F. If anyone’s life is thought to be in danger, PSPs must notify the Chief once that person is safe. PSPs must advise the employee seeking assistance that information said to them is not protected by legal privilege and confidentiality is administratively provided and may not be recognized in court proceedings.
- G. Any department member can communicate with any PSP of their choice; however, it’s encouraged to seek support from PSPs of equal or higher rank. Support can also be sought from non-sworn PSPs.
- H. PSPs are available for all employees, including part-time and student employees, who are experiencing emotional or psychological stress due to personal or professional experience.

1.7.2 PEER SUPPORT TEAM SELECTION

The following shall govern the selection process and criteria for the Peer Support Team:

- A. PSPs can be any departmental employee - sworn or civilian.
- B. PSPs will be chosen from employee volunteers who are in good standing (evaluation ratings of satisfactory or above) and have received recommendations from their supervisors or peers.
- C. Considerations for selection of PSP candidates include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. previous education and training;
 - 2. resolved traumatic experiences; and
 - 3. desirable personal qualities, such as maturity, judgment, and personal and professional credibility.
- D. Sworn officers who are selected must have two years of experience after completing field training and have completed CIT training.
- E. Civilian employees who are selected must have two years of experience after successfully completing their probationary period and have completed CIT training.
- F. PSPs are employees first and peer supporters second. Any conflicts of roles should be resolved in that context.
- G. PSPs cannot abdicate their job responsibility as employees by participating in the program.
- H. The peer support program is not an alternative to discipline. (A PSP does not intervene in the disciplinary process, even upon request.)
- I. The PSP is expected to maintain confidentiality and attend required training.

1.7.3 PEER SUPPORT TEAM TRAINING

The following shall govern the training relevant to the Peer Support Program:

- A. PSPs will receive relevant introductory and continuing training, including:
 - 1. Confidentiality,
 - 2. Communication facilitation and listening skills,
 - 3. Ethics,
 - 4. Problem-solving skills,
 - 5. Alcohol and Substance Abuse,
 - 6. Cross-cultural issues (Implicit Bias training),
 - 7. Stress management (CIT),
 - 8. Suicide assessment (CIT),
 - 9. Depression and burn- out (CIT),
 - 10. Grief management (CIT),
 - 11. Domestic violence (annual training),
 - 12. Crisis management (CIT),
 - 13. Nonverbal communication,
 - 14. When to seek mental health consultation and referral information,
 - 15. Limits and liability (Office of University Counsel).
- B. Basic Peer Support training will be offered to all employees for a baseline understanding of the Peer Support Team.
- C. Peer Support training will be available for family members of employees on an annual basis.
- D. A library of Peer Support resources (books, videos, training materials, service providers, etc.) will be maintained within the department.