

Peer Support Program

1018.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This section defines the policies, formation, maintenance and uses of the Shasta County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team.

It is recognized that employees face many stressful and conflicting situations that may seriously affect their lives both personally and professionally. The Peer Support Program is provided as a resource to facilitate the understanding and expression of feelings and assist in problem solving.

1018.2 POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Shasta County Sheriff's Office to place the highest priority on the general well being of department employees. The department will maintain an active Peer Support Program comprised of Shasta County Sheriff's Office employees who will offer pre-incident education on a variety of topics, provide confidential and nonjudgmental support by specially trained peer support members and when necessary, suggest appropriate referrals. Employee participation in the program is voluntary. No employee shall be directed to participate in the program, nor shall any peer support member be mandated to contact an employee.

1018.3 PROCEDURES

The Peer Support Program shall have a program coordinator(s) who acts as a liaison between Administration and the peer support members. The program coordinator(s) shall be responsible for maintaining the program's integrity, providing training, and monitoring/evaluating the program's overall effectiveness.

1018.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

The most important responsibility of a peer support member is the promotion of trust, anonymity and confidentiality for employees who seek assistance from the program. Communication between a team member and employee is considered "confidential" by the department and the team member must maintain the confidentiality entrusted to him/her and not discuss any information developed in a peer support session except under the following circumstances:

- (a) Where the information received by a peer member must be revealed by law.
- (b) Where the peer support member is involved as a participant or witness.
- (c) Where there is reason to believe that the employee intends to injure himself/herself or another person. In the case of threatened serious injury, a reasonable attempt shall be made to warn the intended victim(s).
- (d) When, due to substance abuse, the employee is a danger to self, citizens or fellow employees.
- (e) When a peer support member has determined that a situation requires specialized assistance, he/she shall obtain the employees approval to discuss the situation with the program coordinator

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Peer Support Program

or a professional referral. Again, it cannot be overemphasized that confidentiality shall and must be maintained by the support member.

1018.5 INTERNAL AFFAIRS

It may occur that a peer support member is supporting an individual who becomes the subject of an internal affairs investigation. A peer support member will be guided by the confidentiality policy of the Peer Support Program. A peer support member may not hamper or impede the actual investigation nor may they attempt to shelter the individual from the department.

The peer support member's role in disciplinary situations will be one of support in dealing with the understanding and expression of emotions faced by the person in the disciplinary process. If at any time the peer support member finds it necessary to invoke the confidentiality provisions of the program, he/she should consult the Peer Support Program Coordinator for guidance and assistance.

Supervisors and representatives responsible for the investigation into an internal affairs issue will not ask the employee under investigation to divulge any conversations they may have had with a peer support member. In turn, peer support members will not be mandated to confirm an employee's participation in the program or divulge the nature or content of a session, unless the content falls under § 1033.4 (a) - (e).

1018.6 PARTICIPATION IN PEER SUPPORT

When there is to be an opening within a unit, the Sheriff or the Sheriff's designee will issue a memorandum giving the title of the position to be filled and the anticipated vacancy date. The memorandum will be posted in a manner that gives reasonable notice to all eligible personnel.

Interested personnel will send written requests for transfer/reassignment for the assignment to the Sheriff via chain of command on or before the closing date.

1018.7 SELECTION CRITERIA

Peer support member selection will be made by a selection panel with approval of the Sheriff. Member selection will be based, in part, on the current and projected needs of the program, group dynamics and the following:

- (a) Willingness to donate time without compensation when approached or requested on off-duty time.
- (b) Willingness to attend regular scheduled meetings and training sessions.
- (c) Willingness to comprise and forward statistics to the Peer Support Program Coordinator on request.
- (d) Have an understanding of confidentiality and nonjudgmental thinking.
- (e) Have the sensitivity to work with all people regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

Peer Support Program

(f) General work performance.

1018.8 REQUIREMENT FOR ACTIVE STATUS

Continued active status as a peer support member is dependent upon participation and compliance with the following:

- (a) Maintain confidentiality.
- (b) Complete statistical sheets upon request.
- (c) Attend scheduled meetings and update training.
- (d) Adhere to the rules and procedures of the Peer Support Program as listed in these orders.
- (e) Observe the Peer Support Program guidelines.
- (f) Satisfactory work performance.

1018.9 REJECTION AND REMOVAL CRITERIA

Rejection of potential peer support member candidates and removal of current members will be made by the program coordinator with approval of the Sheriff or the Sheriff's designee.

No employee shall be accepted into the Peer Support Program if they are currently the subject of serious discipline, fitness for duty, or any other difficulty which would interfere with their ability to perform peer support duties as determined by the program coordinator.

If a candidate fails to fulfill the selection criteria, the request for membership shall be denied.

1018.10 STATISTICAL ACTIVITY SHEET

In order to properly evaluate the Peer Support Program, its effectiveness, and identify areas of concern for pre-incident education, all peer support members shall complete statistical sheets. The data will include number of contacts, time spent, topics discussed and referrals made.

Statistical sheets will be provided to each member by the program coordinator. All peer support members shall complete and forward the statistical sheet to the program coordinator or designated representative when requested. Completion of the form is mandatory for maintaining active status.

Failure to complete and forward three (3) consecutive statistical sheets to the program coordinator will result in removal from active status. Reapplication for active status will be dependent upon the same criteria as for new applicants.

1018.11 TRAINING

- Initial - POST Certified Basic Course (24 hours).
- Update - POST Certified Update Course (16 hours) annual training is recommended.

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Peer Support Program

1018.12 USE OF DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Peer support members may seek the use of available department resources, including facilities and vehicles while they are assisting fellow employees. These facilities will be used with the knowledge and approval of the immediate supervisor responsible for the involved equipment or facility.

1018.13 ROLE MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

Management and supervisory personnel are encouraged to view the Peer Support Program as a support mechanism for their personnel. Peer support members will be involved in helping their fellow employees on and off duty. The peer support member and the employee seeking assistance will need the support and understanding of management and supervisory personnel during this process. Should any conflict arise, the program coordinator shall be contacted.

1018.14 COMPENSATION

Members in peer support agree to volunteer their time, however, monetary compensation or accrual of compensatory time will be granted under the following circumstances:

- (a) Appropriate monetary compensation shall be granted for all training related to peer support with approval of the Peer Support Coordinator(s).
- (b) Compensation shall be granted when a peer support member is off duty and is called in by the Peer Support Coordinator or a supervisor for the sole purpose of rendering support to an employee or their immediate family member(s).
- (c) Compensatory time, or overtime, shall be granted to compensate those that are off duty and attending a routine peer support meeting.

1018.15 PEER SUPPORT DEBRIEFING GUIDELINES

The Department recognizes that there are varying circumstances that could lead to the need for Peer Support resources to assist employees. Following is a general guideline for when Peer Support resources may be utilized to assist employees:

(a) Peer Support Contact

There may be situations where the type of incident itself indicates that it may cause stress for the employee. In this type of situation, a Peer Support member may be contacted by a supervisor, the employee, or other Department member indicating that the employee may have been involved in a high stress incident. A Peer Support team member would make contact with the employee to provide assistance as necessary. The involved employee is not required to discuss the event with the Peer Support team member, rather it is an offer of assistance.

Some examples of events that may lead to informal Peer Support contact would include fatal collisions, severe injury/neglect incidents involving children, employee performs CPR in the field, employee witness to graphic crime scene, death of employee family member, employee in

Shasta County Sheriff's Office

Shasta County SD Policy Manual

Peer Support Program

the hospital, or any incident a supervisor or fellow employee feels that the involved employee is having a difficult time processing.

(b) Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

There are situations where a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is necessary to provide resources and assistance to employees. These debriefings may be initiated by the involved employee, supervisors, or Department management based on the incident. The purpose of this debriefing is to support the employee and provide additional resources as may be requested. Attendance is mandatory for a Department initiated critical incident stress debriefing.

Some examples of events that would lead to a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing would be officer involved shootings, Department member death, Department member family death, Department member major injury, Department member witnesses a suicide, or child fatality.