

OCEAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT
Ocean City Maryland

SUBJECT Peer Counseling and Critical Incident and Debriefing		NO 1100 P-1
APPROVED/EFFECTIVE DATE	AMENDS	RESCINDS
DISTRIBUTION/DATE	REFERENCES	

- .10 The role of a law enforcement employee may often be challenging, but a rewarding career choice. There may be traumatic and "critical incidents" associated with the daily performance within these positions.
- .20 The Ocean City Police Department recognizes its obligation to provide the best resources available to its employees to maintain mental and physical health when stress is brought to the work-place.
- .30 Death, dismemberment, sorrow, and trauma are common place in the daily duties of a law enforcement employee. The Ocean City Police Department recognizes that critical incidents will occur where mental health clinicians recommend stress debriefings occur to benefit the employee; and has
- .40 Established a Peer Support Program within the Ocean City Police Department. Members of this agency will be trained to act as informal support teams and are capable of working with a trained clinician in a critical incident stress debriefing.
- .50 The team is established for the express purpose of assisting members of the Ocean City Police Department who, in the course of their duties, may become involved in a "critical incident," and to assist those members in locating health care providers.
- .60 It shall be the duty and obligation of all peer support persons to maintain strict confidentiality. Any statement or discussion with a Peer Support person, while fulfilling his/her role on the Peer Support Team, will remain confidential, except as enumerated below. Peer Support personnel are prohibited from making any notes or records while providing support.

A. Exceptions to Confidentiality

The following situations are not considered confidential and the Peer support person must report this conduct to the proper authorities:

1. Threats of Suicide
2. Admissions or threats of serious unlawful conduct.
3. Admissions of child abuse.
4. When legally served with an order to do so. (Court System, not from members of the department)

.70 Communication between a Peer Support Person and an individual is considered privileged by the department. It will be the policy of this department not to question Peer Support Persons for the facts surrounding a Critical Incident Debriefing or which individuals attended. The department will not seek any information from a Peer Support Person in his/her role as Peer Support. All department members are to treat all discussions and attendance at a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing as confidential.

.80 Peer Support Persons who violate confidentiality will immediately be dismissed from the Peer Support Team and will be subject to additional disciplinary action.

.90 It shall be the responsibility of the on scene supervisor to contact the Communications Section supervisor, who will notify the Team Coordinator or his/her designee for the following types of incidents:

- A. Any police shooting of a serious nature.
- B. Any department response to a serious injury s injury or death of any member of employee.
- C. Suicide of a member or employee.
- D. Any mass casualty incident.
- E. Any time deemed necessary by the ranking supervisor on the scene.

.100 Once activated, the Peer Support Person will respond and report to the ranking officer on the scene, where he/she will advise the ranking supervisor of his/her arrival and coordinate support. Regardless of rank, the Peer Support Person exercises no command authority when performing his/her duties as Peer Support. While at the scene of the incident, supervisors are reminded that unless absolutely necessary, Peer Support Personnel are not to be used in any role except as Peer Support.

The Peer Support Person should avoid direct involvement in the incident. The role of the Peer Support Person is to provide support to the member(s). He/she does not provide legal counsel. Peer Support personnel should attempt to focus their attention toward members of this department.

- .110 Any member of the department may approach any Peer Support Person at any time. Individual support done off duty is encouraged, but such meetings are purely voluntary on the part of the support person and individual. These meetings must be mutually agreed upon by both parties.
- .120 Peer Support personnel may approach any member of the department during the member's normal tour of duty. The decision to speak with a Peer Support Person rests solely with the department member. It is of paramount importance that involvement with a Peer Support Person be voluntary.
- .130 A critical stress debriefing can be initiated by any member of the department by contacting a Peer Support Person. Supervisors and Peer Support Persons are responsible for identifying the need for a debriefing and shall contact the Team Coordinator. Requests for a debriefing should be made within 24 to 72 hours of the incident. The Lead Clinician shall determine if department members should be utilized in the debriefing. If counselors other than department members are used, then the Lead Clinician shall be responsible for notifying those individuals. Debriefings will be made available for all personnel involved in the incident.
- .140 Members who are interested in becoming a Peer Support Person shall submit their request, via the chain of command, to the Team Coordinator. Interviews with at least the Team Coordinator will be required, prior to appointment to the Team. It is desired to have the Peer Support Team, as a whole, be a reflection of the whole department.
- .150 The Team Coordinator will supply a current list of all Peer Support Personnel to the Communications Section.
- .160 DEFINITIONS:
 - A. Team Coordinator: A member of the team designated to perform the administrative duties of the Team. Responsible for managing the Teams use, funding and training. The Team Coordinator will be selected by the Chief of Police. In his/her duties as Team Coordinator, the Coordinator shall report directly to the Chief of Police or his designee.
 - B. Peer Support Personnel: A member of the department who is trained to identify the normal stress reactions associated with critical incidents and in the techniques that are helpful to resolve these situations. Support Personnel are also trained in

department, city, state and federal benefits available to surviving spouses and/or family. They also provide a source of informal support to members.

- C. Critical Incident: Any situation faced by personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function, either at the scene or later. All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of the type, generates unusually strong feelings in the personnel.
- D. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: Formal critical incident stress debriefings are preferably conducted after 24 hours and within 72 hours of the incident, but may be done at a later time if circumstances necessitate. These meetings are confidential to the participants, and include discussions of involvement, thoughts and reactions resulting from the incident. Also discussion of typical stress related symptoms will be included. This is not a critique of the incident. The purpose of the debriefing is to facilitate normal recovery from the incident.
- E. Individual Consulting: Individual consulting is available at any time, as needed. One to one support is available for any area that is of concern to the initiating member.
- F. Lead Clinician: A mental health professional responsible for conducting liaison with health services. The Lead Clinician is responsible for arranging and coordinating all Critical Incident Stress Debriefings.