SOG

Peer Support Team

Contents:

1. Purpose
2. Objective
3. Mission
4. Team Composition
5. Qualifications
6. Utilization of Peer Support Team
7. Role Responsibilities
8. Administrative Support

**Purpose:**

To establish the purpose, mission, guidelines, and procedures involved in the creation, maintenance, and deployment of the Ocean City Fire Department Peer Support Team.

**Objective:**

The Ocean City Fire Department will maintain a Peer Support Team (PST) to deliver stress management to personnel of the Department and their families. This will be accomplished through a partnership with Behavioral Health Specialists and specially trained Peer Support Personnel.

The PST will provide education and tools to enhance stress resistance and general resiliency of Department members. The team will also provide peer support services before, during, and after critical incidents using the peer support model. When necessary the PST will assist members in the recovery process by referral to appropriate resources.

Where appropriate this policy meets or exceeds the recommendations identified in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program, Chapter 11: *Behavioral Health & Wellness Programs* & Chapter 12: *Occupational Exposure to Atypical Stressful Events* (2018 edition).

**Mission:** *To be available to listen, support, refer, and assist department members and their families during professional and personal times of need.*

**Team Composition:**

*Program Coordinator* – Member of the department tasked with creation and maintenance of the Peer Support Program. Coordinator answers directly to the Chief responsible for Health & Safety

*Program Assistant Coordin*ator – Member of the department tasked with assistance in successful maintenance of the Peer Support Program and works directly with the Program Coordinator.

*Oversight Clinician* – Professionally licensed clinician tasked with clinical oversight to the OCFD Peer Support Program. Works directly with the Program Coordinator to ensure the program is providing therapeutic support to our members.

*Peer Support Team* – Career, retired, and volunteer members of the department who have satisfied minimum Peer Support Team training requirements.

**Qualifications:**

Assignment to the OCFD Peer Support Team is voluntary. Compensation for extended hours on PST deployment for both career and voluntary will go into advisement by management but the PST member understands that PST involvement is voluntary and for the good of the department.

The PST member will complete application for Peer Support Team membership.

The member will be interviewed by the Program Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator

The member will complete department approved Peer Support Program

All members will adhere to absolute confidentiality and sign a confidentiality agreement. All communications between personnel and the PST member acting in the scope of the PST role are confidential, except for the following exclusions

* Threats of suicide or homicide
* Admissions of child or elder abuse
* When required by law or order of the Court

If a member has been found to break confidentiality, membership on the team will be terminated. and the member will be found in violation of SOG 201, for unbecoming behavior of a department member.

Members will receive regularly continuing education related to Peer Support, Health, and Wellness.

Members will attend 6 Peer Support meetings annually

Members will not self-deploy on PST deployments (in and out of county) without the direction of the Team Coordinator or Assistant.

**Utilization of the PST**:

Access to the PST, may be made at any time 24 hours a day. Activation can be made by:

* Individual contact by face to face contact with one of the members
* Calling any PST team member directly
* Calling Duty Chief or OIC for a response
* Requesting response from OC Communications
* Referral by any department member for a response

Phone numbers for team members will be provided on posters at each firehouse and will be placed on the OCVFC & Ocean City Career Firefighter/Paramedic websites.

The PST may also make a response after a potentially traumatic event as well as make regular station visits for outreach, check on the welfare of department members, provide education related to health and wellness, and assist in other supportive roles to its members.

**Role Responsibilities**

**Program Coordinator**

* Develop, maintain, and supervise Peer Support Program
* Develop Peer Support Team Handbook and make available to all members of the department
* Reports directly to the Fire Chief and Chief of Health & Safety
* Enforce program’s strict adherence to member confidentiality
* Contract with clinician to provide clinical oversight to ensure the effectiveness of our Peer Support Program
* Work directly with the contracted clinician to ensure there is 24 hour access to a behavioral health professional
* Act as liaison between the PST members and the clinician
* Provide initial training to new PST members
* Ensure team has access to continuing education
* Ensure requested station visits, routine station visits, and responses to potentially traumatic events are completed in a timely manner
* Act as point of contact for outside agencies and departments
* Oversee and coordinate team member selection process
* Develop department resource list and maintain its accuracy annually
* Supervise the health and wellness of the PST members through regular evaluations
* Ensure Peer Support Team members are tracking contacts
* Maintain Peer Support Program statistics related to the deployment of our team and ensure the statistics maintain confidential
* Provide education to the department on health, wellness, and resiliency
* Conduct meetings with the Peer Support Team at least 9 times annually
* Be available to PST members for support and guidance

**Program Assistant Coordinator**

* Report directly to the PST Coordinator
* Help develop Peer Support Program
* Assist Coordinator with administrative needs of the program
* Maintain and enforce the program’s strict commitment to member confidentiality
* Act as Program Coordinator in his or her absence
* Under supervision of Coordinator, develop and maintain PST budget
* Work with Coordinator to review applications and to assist in interviews related to membership requests
* Ensure documentation of PST activations and contacts are properly completed and secure
* Assist with organizing PST trainings and department education
* Attend Peer Support meetings
* Be available to PST members for contacts and guidance
* Ensure PST members are current on trainings and the have been properly documented

**Oversight Clinician**

* Maintain a contract with the OCFD PST on a yearly basis that details expectations designed to ensure efficacy of the Peer Support Program
* Assist the Program Coordinator as needed
* Be available to PST members on agreed upon hours for direct calls
* Be available to the Program Coordinator 24 hours a day
* Coordinate and evaluate the need for additional care above what the PST can provide
* Respond and provide appropriate interventions as needed
* Provide additional trainings to the team
* Help ensure the health and wellness of the PST members

**Team Member**

* Complete department’s approved initial training
* Sign and maintain a confidentiality agreement
* Provide active listening, general/crisis assessment, action planning, and outreach to all department members and families in need
* Attend minimum of 6 PST meetings a year
* Complete additional trainings as requested
* Provide information to members regarding resources available
* Provide outreach and education to the department on health and wellness as it relates to behavioral health
* Properly document all contacts
* Adhere to written rules of Peer Support SOGs, Fire General Orders, and Team Handbook
* Will not interfere with any departmental investigation or disciplinary action
* Maintain membership with the department in good standing
* May take a leave of absence with council from Team Coordinator

**Administrative Support**

The administration of the Department recognizes that a healthy department is one in which its personnel are psychologically and physically fit. The department, therefore, endorses and supports programs that enhance its personnel to maintain a high level of readiness and resiliency. The peer support model, which provides stress education and comprehensive crisis intervention support, is one such program endorsed by the administration.

Understanding the essential nature of confidentiality to the effectiveness of the peer support program, administration will not ask or be provided any information regarding support given to members by the PST. Only anonymous statistical data will be provided to management demonstrating general involvement of the PST and the department.