

Law Enforcement Profession

The law enforcement profession is a demanding profession. At times, the stress of the job increases to the point where it may be difficult to deal with alone. The person who is impacted the hardest in a crisis is generally the person who is alone or one who has experienced several crises. This can have a serious toll on the health and wellbeing of the individual.

"I highly recommend peer support in law enforcement. Peer Support systems within departments can lead the way to reducing stress and psychological trauma among law enforcement officers. Officers in distress more easily confide in peer support officers than in outside sources, often to the extent of saving their careers and sometimes their lives." John M. Violanti, PhD. Associate Professor and Retired police officer; author of Police Trauma

Recruitment of Candidates

Recruitment and selection of candidates for service as Peer Support Team Members will be an ongoing function of the Program. Peer Support Team Members will be selected from employees who have demonstrated an ability to cope with a traumatic event and effectively deal and command the respect of their peers. Persons seeking a position on the Peer Support Team are encouraged to complete the application process.

Interested candidates should submit an application form provided to Sgt. Mellissa Butts stating:

- why you would like to participate in the program,
- what your qualifications are, and
- how you can benefit the program.

Peer Support Training is continuously given to the members and consist of, but not limited to the following subjects:

- critical incident stress,
- suicide intervention,
- listening skills,
- sympathetic stress,
- basic conflict management and
- mediation techniques,
- referral criteria.

Peer Support Program



Odessa Police Department
205 N. Grant
Odessa, Texas 79761



Confidentiality

The goal of this program is to be proactive in getting assistance, including professional assistance, before things get out of control and affect job performance. This program will create a culture of support crucial to healthy living, and is even more important in professions where there is a high degree of stress such as law enforcement. When the program is in place confidentiality will be maintained according to the following basic guidelines:

1. Since the Peer Support Program is a confidential program. No records identifying employees who utilize the program will be maintained. Only general statistics will be kept to evaluate the program on a yearly basis.
2. Peer Support Team Members will not discuss information obtained while acting in a peer support capacity with anyone other than the Clinical Director/Consultant or his/her designee for the purpose of mental health support unless required by law.
3. Peer Support Team Members will not divulge shared information with other employees, family members, friends, supervisors or management, or the general public. Peer Support Team Members are required by law to report illegal activity or if the employee is a danger to self or others. Peer Support Team Members may consult with the organization's Clinical Director, who will also maintain confidentiality.



Peer Support is an objective and nonjudgmental resource from which employees may voluntarily request support and assistance in working through personal and occupational problems with specially trained co-workers. Peer Support is designed to complement other behavioral health services; it does not replace professional care. Peer support provides a way for employees to "talk-out" problems with specially trained co-workers who "walk in their shoes" and want to help. Peer Support members are trained to use active listening skills, help clarify issues and explore options, support the person through their problem-solving process and/or refer them to professionals as appropriate.

A formal Peer Support team is paraprofessionals who, in addition to the responsibilities above, usually work with

clinical oversight, can respond to critical situations to be a confidential advocate to those in crisis and, when necessary, refer to a mental health professional or other appropriate professional. Team members will have a high degree of aptitude, selected for their experience and personal qualities. These peer support personnel can intervene in an officer's life at a crucial time when he or she is open to input from a trusted peer. It is at this time when they may be open to referral to a more skilled counselor. Peer Support can provide this service without the involvement of supervisory personnel. Peer Support has the potential for legal confidentiality through Texas State law (Health Code): Section 1. Subtitle B, Title 9, Health and Safety Code, **Chapter 784. Critical Incident Stress Management and Crisis Response Services.**