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OPERATIONS MANUAL

STANDARD INSTRUCTION 10 INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM

SECTION 18 PEER SUPPORT

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I. PURPOSE

A comprehensive Peer Support Program (PSP) includes a well-planned, labor-management approach to confidential assistance and support to all Fire-Rescue employees, active and retired as described in A.B. 1116 “California Firefighter Peer Support and Crisis Referral Services Act”. PSP team members will have knowledge of department resources and flow path, pre-incident education, on-scene support, and post-incident intervention (e.g., defusing or debriefing).

II. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) personnel.

III. AUTHORITY

The fire chief authorizes the information within this policy.

IV. POLICY

The Peer Support Program (PSP) is a strictly voluntary program comprised of current and former department members of all divisions who have been specially trained in stress management, crisis intervention, and communication techniques. The peers will also work in conjunction with designated behavioral health professionals.

Department employees and retired members will be trained and certified as peer support members to provide peer support services. The peer support members are not licensed counselors or therapists but act as peer support providers offering information, guidance, and direction during emotionally charged matters, in a confidential setting.

The Peer Support Team members are trained to listen to understand the situation and possible needs. If it is appropriate, according to the member’s case, they refer the member to the proper professional provider and program for assistance. Peers are not trained mental health professionals. The role is one of support and offer resources for critical incidents, job-related stress, and personal crisis of all types.

Peer support is not a substitute for professional counseling. Peer support does not replace Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) or its activation criteria.

A. Program Management

1. The program is administered by the Health and Safety Office (HSO), supervised by the health and safety officer, or designee
2. The Advisory Board (AB) provides recommendations outlined in the Wellness Program in the Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP)
3. Peer Support Clinician
 - a. SDFD provider of psychological services
 - b. Experience in developing Peer Support Teams

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- c. Coordinates quarterly education based on the needs of the department and team
 - d. Identified direct point of contact (POC) for Peer Support Team to facilitate additional clinical resources
 - e. Clinical liaison between all available behavioral health resources through the AB
4. Peer Support Team Coordinator (PSTC)
- a. Provide a link between the program and the AB
 - b. Provide feedback through the chain of command to the Executive Command Staff
 - c. Manage the program and coordinate the peer support team and assist the AB in continuous evaluation and maintenance of the program
 - d. Maintain an accounting of resources utilized by the program, including appropriate nonconfidential data
 - e. Responsible for facilitating the deployment, logistical, administrative and educational needs of the program
 - f. Ensures strict adherence to program's confidentiality policies by all members
5. Lead Peer
- a. Active PST member in good standing, identified by the AB
 - b. The role is designed to be the link between the PST and PSTC
 - c. Help facilitate the logistical and educational needs of the Peer Support Program
 - d. Mentors new peer team members
 - e. Assists with tasks identified by the PSTC
- B. Peer Selection Process
1. Letter of interest identifying applicant's personal strengths, reason, and experience
 2. Letters of interest from the applicant reviewed by AB
 3. An interview by an interview panel consisting of three members of the advisory board
 4. Recommendation from the AB to the fire chief or designee for approval to proceed to the interview process

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C. Peer Responsibilities

1. PST members are volunteers that receive department sponsored in-depth training that is ongoing. A two-year commitment is desirable. If necessary, PST team members can resign at any time by notifying the PSTC.
2. Active duty members of the PST will be placed on special assignment (SA/MX) and paid for initial and any ongoing training.
3. Members must complete initial training before being placed on the team.
4. No records identifying employees who utilize the program will ever be maintained.
5. General “topic” data provided by Peer Support Team members will be utilized by the program management to identify the effectiveness, trends, educational requirements and utilization of the PST.
 - a. No names or identifiable traits will ever be kept or shared
6. All members must attend a minimum of 75% of trainings annually to remain active on PST.
7. All members must adhere to the confidentiality section listed below.
8. All personnel must meet with PST clinician a minimum of twice annually to remain an active member.

D. Training/Education

1. All members of the program including the AB, are required to complete the following trainings based on their position on the team:
 - a. Peer Support Team Coordinator
 - 1) ICISF Assisting Individuals in Crisis & Group Crisis Intervention (Three-Day Course) and
 - 2) ICISF Advanced Group Crisis (Two-Day Course) and
 - 3) ICISF Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Course and
 - 4) IAFF Basic Peer Support Class (Two-Day Course) and
 - 5) California State Fire Marshal Peer Track Courses as identified in A.B. 1116
 - b. Peer Support Team Members and AB
 - 1) ICISF Assisting Individuals in Crisis & Group Crisis Intervention (Three-Day Course) and
 - 2) IAFF Basic Peer Support Class (Two-Day Course) and
 - 3) California State Fire Marshal Peer Track Courses as identified in A.B. 1116

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2. Continuing Education
 - a. Educational content will be identified by the peer support clinician utilizing a variety of factors, i.e., current trends, substance use/abuse, PTSD, etc.
 - b. Trainings will be conducted regularly or as needed when an immediate trend is identified by the AB or peer support clinician.
3. Peer Support Attire
 - a. Class B, casual business attire, or department provided safety polo shirt at all PST-related functions, and events, exceptions can be made by the PSTC.

E. Confidentiality

1. The Peer Support Program is a confidential program as described in A.B. 1116.
2. PST members shall not discuss information obtained while acting in a peer support capacity with anyone other than the mental health professional or his/her designee unless required by law.
3. PST members shall not divulge shared information with other employees, family members, friends, supervisors or management, or the general public except where required by law.
4. No records identifying employees who utilize the program will be maintained.
5. No confidential information can be used for the purposes of a department fact finding.
6. Except where required by law, peer support team members cannot receive a direct or indirect order nor be compelled to share confidential information unless written consent by the employee is expressly given.
7. PST members will maintain confidentiality to ensure the nature and success of the peer program.
8. It is the peer's responsibility to notify the members, before the meeting, of the circumstances they cannot hold confidential.
9. If these guidelines are found to be breached, then the AB has the right to convene and discuss the removal of the peer from the team.
10. The peer may be asked to remove themselves from the PST or be removed by authority of the AB.
11. PST members may disclose confidential communication under the following circumstances as described in AB 1116:

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- a. The peer support team member reasonably must make an appropriate referral of the emergency service personnel to, or consult about the emergency service personnel with, another member of the peer support team or a peer support team clinician associated with the peer support team.
- b. The peer support team member reasonably believes that disclosure is necessary to prevent death, substantial bodily harm, or commission of a crime.
- c. The peer support team member reasonably believes that disclosure is necessary pursuant to an obligation to report instances of child abuse, as required by Section 11166 of the Penal Code, or other obligation to disclose or report as a mandated reporter.
- d. The disclosure is made pursuant to a court order in a civil proceeding.
- e. The emergency service personnel expressly agree in writing that the confidential communication may be disclosed.
- f. If the communication is disclosed for one of the reasons listed above, the PST member shall notify the member of the disclosure in writing through the PSTC.

F. Terms and Conditions

1. Only upon reading and in full agreement to the confidentiality agreement will the training process begin.
2. Any breach in confidentiality can be grounds for removal from the program.