

TITLE: PEER/OFFICER SUPPORT TEAM

CODIFIED: 38.1

EFFECTIVE: 07/23/04

RESCINDS/AMENDS: NEW DIRECTIVE

PAGES: 3

PURPOSE

The Peer Support Team is designed to:

- Provide emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to other employees who express a need for assistance ;
- Promote trust, allow appropriate anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons using Peer Supporters within the guidelines of the program;
- Develop Peer Supporters who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance or referral to professional or alternate resources as required;
- Maintain an effective Peer Supporter training and response program;
- Support those who have had family tragedies;
- Check on status of illness and injuries and provide support where desired and needed.

DISCUSSION

In order to address the Department's need for Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) it is necessary to create and maintain a system through which the Santa Fe Police Department can provide a first line of assistance and basic crisis intervention to Department employees by establishing and maintaining a Peer Support Program.

DEFINITIONS

38.1.01 Peer/Officer Support Team (POST) – The Peer/ Officer Support Team (POST) will be comprised of departmental employees selected and trained to support, give guidance or refer employees

in need of psychological counseling or assistance for personal problems. **The acronym "POST" will be used throughout the document.**

38.1.02 Critical Incident- A critical incident can be defined as any incident which adversely affects you or your family or any event during which the sights, smells or sounds are so vivid as to cause an increase of stress or stress reactions either immediately following the incident or on a delayed basis.

A. For those of us in law enforcement, some of the most common incidents are:

- Involvement in a shooting situation;
- Being the victim of an attack involving deadly force;
- Serious on duty injury to yourself or another Officer;
- An accumulation of stressful calls in a short period of time or multiple victims in a single incident;
- A particularly unusual or gruesome injury or the death of a child or elderly person under unusually tragic circumstances;
- A serious injury to yourself or a family member;
- Divorce, separation or child custody dispute;
- Lawsuits or internal investigations;
- Any incident outside of our normal range of experience.

38.1.03 Debriefing – A confidential, structured meeting which is facilitated by a POST Commander and a mental health professional. The meeting allows participants to share their reactions to the high stress incident and to vent their emotions. POST members may provide feedback about possible reactions and symptoms, which are normal to unusual events, as well as referral information. The debriefing is not a critique of the incident.

38.1.04 POST Member – A SFPD employee trained in listening and assessment skills that respond to department or employee requests for help and/or referral to professional assistance or psychological services.

38.1.05 POST Commander – A SFPD employee selected by the Chief of Police and trained in POST

counseling. The POST Commander will supervise the team and coordinate training and response with the contract Psychologist.

38.1.06 Defusing – Occurs during or immediately after a major critical incident by stabilizing individual emotionally or stabilizing potentially emotionally-charged situations.

38.1.07 POST Psychologist – A psychologist licensed by the State of New Mexico and contracted by the SFPD.

38.1.08 Mental Health Professional (MHP) – A person who has at least a Masters Degree in a behavioral science e.g. psychology or clinical social work, with an emphasis on counseling, crisis intervention and traumatic stress education.

38.1.09 Demobilization – Quick informational rest session that serves as a screening opportunity to assure that individuals who may need assistance are identified early after the traumatic event.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to offer assistance and appropriate support resources to employees and their families when personal or professional problems negatively effect their work performance, family unit or self. This assistance is confidential, providing it does not violate any law or Department regulation.

PROCEDURE

38.1.10 POST Commander Responsibilities

- A. The POST Commander is responsible for the overall administration of the POST Program that includes but is not limited to:
1. Overseeing the selection process of POST members and POST Supervisors;
 2. Coordinating required training for POST members;
 3. Determining whether confidentiality will be breached or maintained when POST members encounter circumstances of a serious nature which require direction/advice;
 4. Screening requests for POST member services from other agencies and determine response;

5. Consult with POST psychologist regarding individuals who may require referral for additional support and or counseling.

38.1.11 Mandatory POST Notification

- A. The POST Commander or his/her designee **shall** be notified by the critical incident on-scene commander whenever the following occurs:
1. Any line of duty death;
 2. Any incident in which action taken by or against a department employee results in death or serious physical injury;
 3. Any shooting incident involving a department employee except for the killing of severely injured animals or accidental weapon discharge;
 4. A reasonable belief by a supervisor that the affected employees possess a significant threat to self or others;
 5. Any department motor vehicle, aircraft/watercraft incident or crash which results in death or serious physical injury;
 6. Any incident involving multiple deaths;
 7. Any suicide involving a department employee.

38.1.12 Discretionary POST Notification

- A. Any supervisor or POST member may notify the POST Commander or his/her designee whenever it is felt that POST services are needed to assist a SFPD employee.

38.1.13 Activation Procedures/Critical Incident

- A. The On Duty Commander will advise the POST Commander or his/her designee as to the nature of the critical incident:
- B. The POST Commander or his/her designee will communicate with the critical incident on-scene commander to evaluate the need for POST services.
- C. The POST Commander or his/her designee will:
1. Determine if a defusing or debriefing is needed,
 2. Initiate contact of POST members and coordinate with their appropriate

supervisor(s) in order to facilitate on scene action,

3. Contact the supervisor in charge of the investigation or incident to coordinate on-scene defusing or debriefing,
4. Determine the number of POST members needed for a particular incident. Activation of all or part of the POST may depend upon the type and scope of the incident and the number of employees involved.

38.1.14 Activation Procedure/Peer Support

- A. Any employee may contact any POST member to seek guidance, assistance or referral.

38.1.15 Debriefings

- A. Participation in debriefings is voluntary for the affected employee.
- B. Debriefings will normally be held within three days of the incident.
- C. A mental health professional shall be present for a debriefing.

38.1.16 Defusing

- A. Participation in defusing is voluntary for the affected employee.
- B. Defusing will normally be held within 8 hours of an incident.
- C. Is aimed at the core-working group most seriously affected by the incident.

38.1.17 POST Member Selection/Removal

- A. All employees are eligible to apply for membership to the POST.
- B. The POST Commander will solicit applicants by publishing announcements in the Police Departments Special Orders.
- C. Applicants who express interest in POST membership must have written recommendations from their immediate and second level supervisors.
- D. The POST Commander will select the applicants and forward their names to the Chief of Police for final approval.
- E. POST members can be removed at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

38.1.18 Training Requirements

- A. The POST Commander or his/her designee will coordinate training for all POST members.
- B. POST members are required to attend basic Critical Incident Stress Management training prior to responding to a critical incident pursuant to this policy.
- C. POST members will also participate in other Training including, but not limited to, listening skills and confidentiality issues.

38.1.19 Assignments

- A. Prior to responding to any incident, the POST commander will notify the POST members who will notify their immediate supervisors.
- B. Requests for POST services from other agencies or individuals will be directed to POST Commander for response.

38.1.20 Confidentiality Guidelines

- A. To the extent possible, confidentiality will be maintained to protect the identity of employees and the content of any contact by a member of the POST. However, confidentiality cannot be absolute because of the seriousness of a circumstance or legal requirement, for example, when circumstances indicate that the employee poses a significant threat to self or others.

DRAFTED(awm)04/04

APPROVED: _____

BEVERLY K. LENNEN
Chief of Police

DATE: 07-23-04