



JAMES CITY COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

PURPOSE

This manual outlines the James City County Public Safety Behavioral Health Program. This directive will identify the program's objectives and will provide general guidelines for its operations, selection of personnel for assignment to the Peer Support Team, training, administration, and confidentiality.

Proven successful public safety stress management models offer a comprehensive support approach. The goal of the JCC Public Safety Behavioral Health Program is to offer help in a variety of cohesive ways ranging from The Peer Support Team program to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

POLICY

The James City County Fire Department which includes the Emergency Communications Center, The James City Bruton Volunteer Fire Department, and the James City County Police Department has recognized the value of providing a mechanism for its employees to cope with personal and professional stress. The County and the Departments value the health and well-being of all personnel. It is acknowledged that all public safety personnel encounter many stressful situations, especially during certain operational functions and because of this, the JCCFD and JCCPD shall maintain a Behavioral Health Program.

PROCEDURE

The Public Safety Peer Team is composed of a group of peers who have volunteered, and been selected to, make themselves available to any member of both departments. The team consists of specially trained peer supporters, chaplains, and professional mental health providers trained to give all members the opportunity to receive emotional and tangible peer support through times of professional and personal crises and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties.

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RESPONSIBILITIES

The Fire Chief, Police Chief and ECC Director shall be responsible for appointing a Peer Support Team Coordinator for each department to work together and oversee the Peer Support Program.

The Peer Support Team Clinical Director shall be a mental health professional representative from the County's Employee Assistance Program and is responsible for serving as a professional consultant for the Behavioral Health Program.

The Peer Support Team Coordinators are responsible for coordinating and managing resources that extend beyond the JCC Peer Support Team in the event that outside resources are needed. The Peer Support Team Coordinators will be one point of contact in the event that a request is made and shall act as a liaison as needed to the Peer Support Team Members and Fire Administration.

The Peer Support Team Coordinators shall be responsible for the overall management of the Behavioral Health Program and Peer Support Team and shall assist in coordinating resources as needed with on duty personnel, as well as off duty requests for support. The Peer Support Team Coordinators shall evaluate the program on an ongoing basis to ensure the effectiveness of the program.

The Peer Support Team Leaders are assigned to serve as points of contact for each shift within each department. Peer Support Team Leaders shall be contacted in the event the Peer Team Coordinator is off duty and will be responsible for coordinating resources to meet request needs.

The Battalion Chief of Training shall be responsible for ensuring behavioral health awareness training is included in recruit training as well as on going incumbent training on resiliency and stress management.

Incident Commanders (IC), Battalion Chiefs, Captains and Lieutenants shall be responsible for conducting After Action Reviews (AAR)/"Hot Washes" to assist in identifying potential personnel who may be in need of Peer Support.

All personnel shall be trained in the awareness and recognition of the signs and symptoms of a potential stress injury and the resources available for assistance including requesting the Peer Support Team.

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DEFINITIONS

Critical Incident: Any situation faced by personnel that causes them to experience a strong emotional reaction which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function either professionally or personally.

Critical Incident Defusing: Formal critical incident stress defusings are to occur as soon as practical, preferably within eight hours of an incident. The process explores the responders' reaction to the event and provides education as to the possible emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual reactions to the event that the responders may experience in the 24-72 hours following the critical incident. This intervention may be done by peers without the assistance of a mental health provider

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD): Formal critical incident stress debriefings are preferably conducted between 24-72 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 a discussion of typical stress-related problems will be included. **NOTE: THIS IS NOT A CRITIQUE OF THE INCIDENT.** The purpose of the debriefing is to facilitate normal recovery from the incident. A CISD must include a mental health professional as a member of the team.

Crisis Management Briefing (CMB): A large scale crisis intervention for the purpose of providing information, reducing the sense of chaos, and controlling rumors. Information is given by a reputable representative of the organization (Fire/Police Chief or designee) who shares pertinent facts about the situation. The Peer Support Team Clinical Director, or designee, reviews the psychological impact of the event and the typical symptoms that might be experienced. An opportunity for questions and answers may or may not be included based on the situation.

Clinical Director: All clinical activities are led by a mental health clinician who has postgraduate education in the behavior sciences and has been trained in the critical incident stress review process. Part of the responsibilities of the Clinical Director is to serve as a consultant to the Peer Support Team. Upon notification of a critical incident, the Clinical Director should be consulted as to the appropriate intervention. The Clinical Director will provide and coordinate Team training as available.

Peer Support Team Coordinator: The Department members designated by the Fire Chief, Police Chief and ECC Director to coordinate the Peer Support Team and Behavioral Health Program and take responsibility for the administration of the program to include member recruitment/assignment/selection and supervision of Peer Support Team members in the performance of their duties.

Peer-to-Peer Support: Peer-to Peer-Support is individual support that is available at any time, as needed. This support is available both on-duty and off-duty. One-on-one support is available for any area of concern to the initiating employee.

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CRITICAL INCIDENT DEFUSING

Peer Support Team activation for Critical Incident Defusing:

It shall be the responsibility of the Fire Department on duty Operations Battalion Chief (BC), the Police Department Officer-In-Charge (OIC), or the ECC Supervisor to contact their respective Peer Team Coordinator or Peer Team Leader for any request for a Peer Support Team Activation. The Peer Support Team Coordinator and/or Team Leaders shall be contacted for the following types of incidents:

- The serious injury or death of a Department employee or other emergency personnel working at an incident or while enroute;
- Multiple casualties;
- Suicide of a Department member;
- Serious injury or death resulting from operations (e.g. vehicle accidents, structure fires);
- Death and/or violence of a child;
- Incidents in which circumstances trigger profound emotional reactions;
- Other incidents at the discretion of the BC, OIC or ECC Supervisor.

Once activated, the Peer Support Team member(s) will respond to the scene or other pre-determined location and report to the on-scene Incident Commander. Regardless of rank, the Peer Support Team member exercises no command authority when performing their duties as a team member. The Peer Support Team Member will avoid direct involvement in the incident. The role of the Peer Support Team member is to provide support and determine who may need formal peer support. They do not provide legal counsel. Peer Support Team members should attempt to focus their attention toward members or employees of this Department. It is recommended that the Peer Support Team members be of the same rank structure as the firefighter or officer being assisted if possible (i.e. firefighter to firefighter, police officer to police officer, lieutenant to lieutenant, captain to captain, or chief to chief etc.) unless otherwise requested by the affected employee.

Any employee who is in need of formal peer support or a higher level of care shall be placed out of service for the duration of the peer support or care.

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CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFINGS

If it has been determined that a formal stress debriefing is warranted, the Peer Support Team Coordinator for the requesting department shall be contacted and briefed on the situation. The Team Coordinator will determine what resources are required and coordinate a timely response. Every effort will be made to ensure the debriefing is conducted within 24-72 hours of the incident. The Peer Support Team Coordinator(s) will call EAP to schedule a debriefing. In the event a Peer Team Coordinator is not available to call, a Peer Team Leader or the on Duty Fire Department Operations Battalion Chief/Police Department OIC may call to schedule.

Note: Several factors determine the need for a formal stress debriefing and should not be limited to the type of incident alone. Factors such as: request made by personnel who responded, personal stress reactions, and signs of severe stress impact should all be considered when requesting a CISD.

Debriefings will be made available for all personnel involved in the incident. All personnel involved in the incident have a valuable contribution to make to the recovery process. Although each individual's need for assistance may vary, the participation of ALL is an important aspect of the recovery process and is encouraged. Personnel who attend the debriefing may leave at any time during the debriefing.

Note: Participation in a CISD is voluntary, however it is encouraged that all personnel involved in the incident be present for the debriefing to support those personnel who may have a stress reaction from the incident.

When conducting a CISD, all personnel shall be placed out of service for the duration of the debriefing. If multiple companies are involved then multiple debriefings may be required to accommodate all who were involved.

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ONE-ON-ONE PEER SUPPORT

Any member of the Department may approach any Peer Support Team member at any time and request a one-on-one meeting. Every attempt should be made to conduct these meetings during working hours; however, if the situation warrants, meetings can occur off-duty as one of the goals of peer support is to meet personnel in a location that meets their needs. Overtime shall be approved for the team member by the Team Coordinator or Direct Supervisor.

If conducted off-duty, the Team member shall contact his/her Team Leader or Team Coordinator to notify them of the meeting for safety reasons. It is of paramount importance that all parties understand and agree that meeting or speaking with a Peer Support Team Member is voluntary. Both parties will agree to the location and time of the meeting.

Note: The Peer Support Team has the flexibility to meet with employees off-duty if requested, however any off-duty intervention will be voluntary on the part of the requesting employee and therefore the requesting employee's time will not be compensated.

Note: Peer Support Team Members will avoid discussing specifics of cases if they are under investigation with the involved employee. If specific facts are brought up by the involved employee, the Peer Support Team member will redirect the employee to discuss how the incident affected them and offer services to assist the involved employee.

When conducting one-on-one support on-duty, the employee shall be placed out of service for the duration of the meeting with the Peer Support Team member.

All contacts and conversations with a Peer Support Team member are strictly confidential as outlined in the confidentiality section of this policy.

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REFERRALS

Any employee aware of another employee who may need assistance can initiate a referral by contacting any Peer Team member, Leader or Coordinators. The referred employee will be contacted to assess their receptiveness to Peer Support.

Supervisory personnel have the authority and responsibility to recommend a Peer Support contact when appropriate. It must be understood that this support is voluntary and that an employee cannot be ordered to participate. The employee shall be assured that the consultation has been arranged solely for his/her benefit and will be confidential.

Referrals shall not be used as a disciplinary sanction.

A family member, non-department friends and associates of the employee may also make a referral, in which case, the employee's participation is also still voluntary.

CALLBACK FOR PEER SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS

Callback: the Peer Support Team is comprised of a Team Leader on each shift of the Fire Department and Police Department. When an on duty Supervisor wishes to utilize the team they will contact the Team Leader on their shift to begin coordination. If there is no Team Leader on duty the Supervisor may contact their respective Team Coordinator, a Team Coordinator from either of the other departments, or as last resort a Team Leader or Team Member that is off duty.

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CONFIDENTIALITY

It shall be the duty and obligation of all Peer Support Team Members to maintain strict confidentiality as outlined in Virginia State Code §19.2-271.4

Any statement or discussion with a Peer Support Team member while fulfilling his role on the Peer Support Team shall remain confidential. Peer Support Team members are prohibited from taking any notes, records, or recording while providing support.

Communications between a Peer Support Team member and an employee is considered privileged. It is the policy of both the James City County Fire (to include the ECC) and Police Departments not to question or seek out information from the Peer Support Team members for the facts surrounding a crucial incident debriefing or any other Peer contact. Peer Support Team members should, when possible, be of equal rank structure to the employee being assisted unless otherwise requested.

All Department employees are to treat all discussions and attendance at a critical incident stress debriefing as confidential. Department employees who violate confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action.

Peer Support Team members who violate confidentiality shall be immediately dismissed from the Team and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

Exceptions to Confidentiality – The provision of privileged communications shall not apply when:

- A person whose communications are privileged have waived the privilege. Sometimes Peer Team Members may ask the employee if it is ok if they discuss the employee's problem with other team members in order to provide better assistance. All Peer Team members will hold all employee interaction with the highest degree of confidentiality.
- Criminal activity is revealed.
- A member of the Peer Support Team reveals the content of privileged information to prevent a crime against any other person or a threat to public safety.
- The privileged information reveals intent to defraud or deceive the investigation into a critical incident.
- A member of the Peer Support Team reveals the content of privileged information to the employer of the public safety personnel regarding criminal acts committed or information that would indicate that the person poses a threat to themselves or others.

The Team Coordinators will handle questions or concerns posed by Peer Support Team members or Department members regarding the program to include breeches and possible breeches of confidentiality by Peer Support Team members.

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

Optima EAP provides short-term, solutions-focused counseling led by caring, compassionate and skilled counselors. Sessions are available for the employee, household members and dependents.

- The number of counseling sessions for county employees is 5 per issue.
- If additional services are needed, beyond the scope of your EAP benefit, we will assist you with referrals to use your mental health benefit or provide recommendations for reputable community-based resources.

You may also visit <https://www.optimahealth.com/eap> and sign in with **JCC** for details about classes, tools, and articles on a wide variety of topics, including emotional concerns, mental health treatment, workplace issues, and inspirational pieces. Optima EAP is a valuable resource for helping you deal with a wide variety of issues and topics. Some reasons people come to the EAP include:

Substance Abuse

- Alcohol Dependency
- Drug Dependency
- Prescription Drug Abuse
- Co-dependency and concerns for family members

Personal and Emotional Problems

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression, suicidal thoughts
- Anger
- Grief and loss

Family and Relationship Problems

- Marital problems
- Communication issues
- Parenting concerns and parent-child conflict
- Adjustment to separation and divorce
- Single parenting concerns
- Blended families
- Step-parenting
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Caring for an aging parent

Work and Life Issues

- Job-related stress
- Adjusting to job changes
- Financial problems
- Legal problems
- Communication problems
- Balancing work and family demands

To Schedule an Appointment

- Call Optima EAP at 1-800-899-8174 or 757-363-6777 and one of our representatives will locate a counselor near your home or work and help to schedule an appointment that is convenient for you.
- Representatives are available to schedule appointments from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., Monday – Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. on Friday.
- If you need to cancel an appointment, please contact our office so that we may make that appointment available for another client.

Remember that Optima EAP services are provided at no cost to you – or your household members – and are confidential.

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PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Team Coordinators and the Clinical Director are responsible for the general administration of the Peer Support Program as follows:

SELECTION OF PERSONNEL FOR ASSIGNMENT

The Fire Chief, Police Chief and ECC Director or their designee(s) shall appoint all Peer Support Team members based on the demonstrated skills and experience of applicants who successfully meet the following criteria:

1. Endorsement of applications by the individual's Supervisor;
2. No formal disciplinary action during the twelve month period preceding the date of application that is deemed detrimental to the team.
3. Must demonstrate excellent communication skills;
4. Must appear before a Peer Support Applicant Review Board comprised of the Peer Support Team Coordinators and Clinical Director or their designees.
5. Must attend and successfully complete minimum training standards set forth by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and the JCC Public Safety Behavioral Health Program.

Note: Assignments will be made as vacancies occur. Applications will be on a voluntary basis.

CHAPLAINS

Specially trained Public Safety Chaplains will be considered a vital part of the Peer Support Team and will be included in the training/activities of the Team, as well as the other activities they perform in their volunteer service to the Department.

Chaplains must be trained to minimum International Critical Incident Stress Foundation standards for chaplains prior to their use on the Peer Support Team. It is the responsibility of the Team Coordinator to assure that all Chaplains that volunteer to assist with the Peer Support Team meet the training standards.

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TRAINING

Peer Support Team members must be trained to minimum International Critical Incident Stress Foundation standards prior to their use as a Peer Support Team Member. Peer Support Team Members must maintain these standards of training to remain in the assignment. It is the responsibility of the Team Coordinator to assure that all Peer Support Team members meet training standards. The Team Coordinators will supply a current list of all Peer Support Team members to the both departments.

Initial team member training consists of the ICISF-approved CISM Training, a one-day Suicide Awareness Training, and a four-hour Stress First Aid Training.

At a minimum, quarterly training is provided for established Peer Support Team members and will be based on the needs of the team as determined by analysis of program effectiveness and/or increases in specific stress reactions being addressed.

Additional meetings and training may be provided by the Peer Support Team Coordinators and/or the Peer Support Team Clinical Director.

The Peer Support Team Clinical Director from the County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will maintain the training materials for the Peer Support Team members and ensure that they are kept up-to-date with current procedures.

Identification and coordination of appropriate training for Peer Support Team members and maintenance of the training records will be coordinated between the Team Coordinators and Clinical Director.

Annual wellness checks will occur to ensure Peer Team Members are remaining mentally healthy.

REPORTING

The Team Coordinators, or designee, will compile a monthly report comprised of the numbers of personnel who provided a group debriefing and/or one-on-one contacts. No specific incident details or names will be included in this report to ensure confidentiality is protected. The completed monthly report will be sent from the Team Coordinators to the department Chiefs. This information is provided solely as a means to determine how often the program is being utilized.

The Team Coordinators will prepare and disseminate to all employees a current list of the Peer Support Team members.

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