



# OFFICE OF THE COUNTY SHERIFF

Montgomery County, Maryland

*Darren M. Popkin, Sheriff*



## GENERAL ORDERS/PERSONNEL PROCEDURES

<u>Subject:</u>	<u>Number:</u>	<u>Effective Date:</u>
Peer Support	2.34	08/30/17

**Purpose:** This directive establishes procedures for the implementation, maintenance, and usage of the Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team (PST), also referred to as Peer Support. The PST will be utilized to provide support and assistance to members of the Office who have experienced or been exposed to a traumatic event. **(22.2.3)**

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### **I. Team Composition**

- A. The Peer Support Team (PST) may consist of the following personnel:
  - (1) A deputy at the rank of Sergeant or above who has been designated by the Sheriff or Chief Deputy to oversee the operation of the PST.
  - (2) A group consisting of sworn and non-sworn employees who have been trained in crisis intervention.
- B. The team is under the clinical supervision of the Montgomery County Office of Human Resources, Police Stress Management Division.

### **II. Utilization of the PST**

The PST is available for use in the following circumstances:

- A. When a Sheriff's Office member witnesses the death or serious injury of a person.

This includes but is not limited to:

- (1) Death or serious injury of a Sheriff's Office employee.

- (2) Law enforcement action taken by a Sheriff's Office employee resulting in death or serious injury to any person.
- B. Incidents involving death, serious injury or emotional trauma to a child.
- C. Situations occurring on or off duty involving Sheriff's Office personnel which by their nature would have a severe adverse effect. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - (1) The sudden, and or violent death of a family member.
  - (2) The discovery of a life-threatening illness.
  - (3) General stressors of daily life that may impact on the Sheriff's Office staff (Sworn and Non-sworn).

### **III. Confidentiality of Interventions**

- A. PST members are committed to the principles of confidentiality and integrity while providing peer support to both sworn and non-sworn employees of the Sheriff's Office.
- B. The Office will respect the privacy of communications occurring during peer support intervention. PST members will maintain a strict standard of privacy by not revealing information gained during peer support interventions.
- C. The general welfare of an employee is of primary consideration.
- D. PST will not interfere with any criminal or administrative investigation being conducted by the Sheriff's Office or another law enforcement agency.

### **IV. Circumstances for PST Activation**

- A. The PST will only be activated upon notification of, and with the approval of the Sheriff, Chief Deputy, or their designee.
- B. When a qualifying incident occurs, the senior ranking deputy on the scene will evaluate the need for PST involvement and, when appropriate, contact the Peer Support Supervisor for direction.
- C. Employees in need of personal assistance may also request PST involvement by contacting the Peer Support Supervisor directly.

### **V. Qualifications and Training**

- A. Assignment to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team is voluntary and is an adjunct assignment.

- B. The Chief Deputy will post a vacancy announcement when necessary to solicit applications for positions in the PST. Interested applicants must submit a memorandum to the Chief Deputy which will include their qualifications for the position.
- C. The initial training of personnel for the PST is extensive and must be accomplished under the coordination and approval of the Montgomery County Office of Human Resources Police Stress Management Division.
- D. The Montgomery County Department of Police Peer Support Team is the primary agency responsible for handling critical incidents within the county.

## **VI. Member's Responsibilities**

- A. PST members will:
  - (1) Conduct themselves in a professional manner, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the individual seeking support. They will recognize that usage of the PST services is voluntary.
  - (2) Not interfere with any criminal or administrative investigation being conducted by the Sheriff's Office or another law enforcement agency.
  - (3) Not interfere or assist in any investigatory process.
  - (4) Not interfere with the activities of the bargaining unit representatives who are serving as representatives to the employee, but will be readily available to provide appropriate assistance upon their request.
- B. In cases involving the possibility of administrative or criminal sanction, the Montgomery County Office of Stress Management and police psychologists will have full responsibility for responding to employees directly involved.

## **VII. Documentation**

- A. A unique tracking number will be generated by the Peer Support Supervisor upon each request for Peer Support services and/or each time the PST is activated whether requested by an employee or an employee's supervisor.
  - (1) The composition of the tracking number will be as follows:
    - (a) An example of a complete tracking number is: PR-120117-01.
    - (b) Each number will start with the prefix PR indicating Peer Response.

- (c) A six-digit number will be generated based on the date of the request. For example, an incident which took place on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 would be marked 120117.
  - (d) The last digit will indicate the peer support request number; if there are multiple requests for services on the same date.
- (2) If a Peer Support Team member is informally approached by an employee for purposes of peer support intervention and the intervention required does not go beyond the level of an informal conversation, the interaction will not need to be documented. Peer Support Team members are encouraged to discuss all interactions with the Peer Support Supervisor, if appropriate, for guidance related to any necessary follow-up actions.
- B. Confidentiality is imperative when documenting Peer Support interactions. All reporting must remain completely anonymous.
- C. Annually, the Peer Support Supervisor must submit a memorandum to the Sheriff documenting each the instance of Peer Support intervention. The memorandum must discuss, the following information:
- (a) Total number of activations.
  - (b) Training and/or equipment needs for the team.
  - (c) Recommendations for additional personnel based on operational needs.

This memorandum must not document any identifying information of those employees who have received peer support intervention.

## VIII. CALEA Standards

### 22.2.3

AUTHORITY:

  
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08/30/2017