

	HARRISONBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT General Orders	Policy Number: 707
	Chapter: Support Services	Total Pages: 6
	Section: Incident Support Services	Issue Date: 07/02/2021
	Issued By: Kelley Warner, Chief of Police	Effective Date: 07/02/2021
	Replaces: All General Orders Previously Issued Relative to Subject	
VALEAC Standards:		

a. POLICY AND PURPOSE

This order provides general guidelines for all Department members to include sworn and non-sworn, in regards to the various resources provided by the Incident Support Services (ISS). The goal of the program is to provide overall emotional/mental wellness support to Department personnel. The Harrisonburg Police Department immediately provides a comprehensive array of services to personnel who are involved in traumatic events, personal issues and ensure appropriate follow-up as needed. Personnel using the services will have the option of receiving the same services for a significant other or immediate family member.

b. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

c. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Behavioral or Medical Health Care Professional** - Virginia-licensed clinical psychologist, Virginia-licensed psychiatrist, Virginia-licensed clinical social worker, or Virginia-licensed professional counselor, who has at least five years of experience as a mental health consultant working directly with emergency medical services personnel or public safety personnel, chosen to assist Peer Support Team members as needed.
- b. **Critical Incident** - Any event that has emotional power to overwhelm an individual's usual ability to cope which may interfere with the functioning of a person's coping skills immediately or in the future.

- c. **Incident Support Services (ISS)** - Is a comprehensive collection of personnel support services to include Peer Support Team, psychologists, police chaplains, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and all other contracted services designed to help personnel and their family maintain their professional and personal emotional/mental wellness. Incident Support Services will be assigned to the Administrative Bureau Commander, under the direction of the Peer Support Director.
- d. **Individual Debriefing** - A private discussion that occurs between Peer Support Team member(s) or psychologist and an employee regarding a stressful incident. Family members or others may be included upon request of the employee.
- e. **Military Liaison Officer** - Individual who coordinates all information between the Department and deploying military member, when on active duty call ups
- f. **Peer Support Director** - Individual who is responsible for direct oversight of the team and coordination or response to critical incidents and any other event that may involve the use of peer support team members.
- g. **Peer Support Team Debriefing** - A closed confidential discussion with a person or persons involved in an incident and Peer Support Team members.
- h. **Peer Support Team Leader** - Individual who is responsible to carry out the duties of the Peer Support Director in their absence
- i. **Peer Support Team Members** - Department personnel who are specifically trained to respond to traumatic situations to provide emotional/mental support to personnel directly involved or others that may be affected.
- j. **Police Chaplains** - Clergy member who has received training in their own religion and training to certify them as a police chaplain. Must be willing to provide personnel with emotional and spiritual support, during and after an incident.
- k. **Psychologist** - Psychologist who is readily available in order to provide psychological and emotional assistance to personnel on a regular basis. Must be board certified.

d. DEPARTMENT APPROVED PSYCHOLOGIST

The primary goal of the psychologist is to assist employees in maintaining overall emotional/mental wellness as it relates to their work environment. They respond to critical incidents at the direction of the Peer Support Director, Peer Support Team Leader, or their designee in order to assist officers in dealing with the various stressors associated with such incidents and also provide assistance to employees who are in crisis due to other stressors/factors.

a. Duties

1. During and following critical incidents, the psychologist shall ensure the psychological well-being of affected employee(s), provide individual evaluation of involved employee(s) psychological/emotional state, and provide a clinical assessment of employee's ability to return to work. The psychologist shall also coordinate and provide post critical incident psycho-educational information and support regarding stress and trauma for employees and ensure squads/units receive appropriate follow-up care and coordination of services.
2. The psychologist is also responsible for the following general clinical services:
 - a. Care models, which may include individual, family, and group therapies
 - b. Facilitates referrals to alternative care services, when appropriate

- c. Offers post-incident evaluation of officers' and employees' morale, mindset, and psychological/emotional status
3. The ISS psychologists **shall not** become involved in "**Fit for Duty**" cases. A contracted psychologist from a separate company specializing in "fit for duty" shall provide appropriate evaluation and testing for these types of cases.
4. Confidentiality parameters will be reviewed with each employee who seeks assistance or who is required to have contact with a psychologist. Respecting privacy is paramount; therefore, all psychologists will follow applicable laws and ethical guidelines to ensure that appropriate assistance is granted. However, there are several conditions under which confidential information may be released to the Peer Support Director or designee. Psychologists are required to release confidential information when there is a risk of serious harm to self or others, or there is a suspicion of child or elderly abuse. Confidential information can also be released at the request of the employee with a signed release, or in response to a court order.
5. Commanders shall contact the Peer Support Director if they need further guidance on the roles/responsibilities of the psychologists or need assistance determining the level of assistance needed in a case. Commanders and supervisors should give special consideration to the use of psychologists during administrative investigations when the employee is relieved of duty. Employees involved in crisis situations, such as those relieved of duty, are likely to experience stress and challenges in their personal and professional lives. At times, employees may be reluctant to seek professional help for a myriad of reasons. Although the relieved employee will not be required to meet with a psychologist in every relief of duty case, commanders and supervisors shall inform the employee of their services at the time of the relief of duty.

e. TYPES OF INCIDENTS

The Peer Support Director along with a Peer Support Team, psychologist and chaplain shall respond and provide services for the following:

- a. Any incident that results in death or serious injury to a person; by a employee of the department
- b. Any incident in which results in the death or serious injury to a employee of the department in the line of duty
- c. Death, serious injury or medical emergency that occurs off duty to a employee of the department
- d. Any critical incident that the on scene supervisor, duty officer or peer support director deems appropriate
- e. Requests from other agencies to assist as approved by the Chief of Police

f. PEER SUPPORT TEAM

- a. The Peer Support Team will consist of both sworn and non-sworn representatives the Department, and will be selected by the Peer Support Team Director and Team Leader, with approval by the Administrative Bureau Commander. The Peer Support Team will report directly to the Peer Support Director or designee on matters concerning the program. Peer Support Team members will be trained in areas pertinent to critical incidents and will be required to attend several training sessions each year.

- b. The Peer Support Team will:
 - 1. Provide immediate support services as needed when responding to the scene of a critical incident, to include providing confidential support to affected employee(s), contacting family members, arranging transportation, providing food, etc.
 - 2. Provide critical incident education, as appropriate.
 - 3. Act as liaison with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and aid the police psychologist, chaplains, etc.
 - 4. Participate in debriefing and diffusing sessions with affected employees. Assist the Department's psychologist with follow-up as directed after an incident.
 - 5. Coordinate long term assistance at the direction of peer support director.
- c. The Peer Support Director or designee shall be notified promptly of any critical incident involving a Harrisonburg Police Department employee and determine the level of response needed from Peer Support.
- d. Commanders or first line supervisors who need assistance from The Peer Support Team due to an immediate incident or for employee related issues shall make the request through the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). ECC personnel shall contact the Peer Support Director or designee and relay the information for appropriate follow up. This does not preclude any departmental employee from informally contacting any Peer Support Team member for personal assistance. ECC will maintain a current on-call roster for Peer Support Director or designee and to assure timely and accurate notifications.
- e. Peer Support should be initiated as soon as practical as long as the use of the team does not interfere with any criminal or internal affairs investigation.
- f. Any employee that becomes involved in a criminal or serious internal affairs investigation will be precluded from acting as a member of the peer support team while under such investigation.

g. POLICE CHAPLAINS

- a. The Harrisonburg Police Department's Chaplain Unit operates at the direction of the Chief of Police or his designee.
- b. Employees of the Chaplain Unit shall have the following qualifications:
 - 1. A police chaplain must be ordained, invested or a certified member of the clergy in good standing of a recognized religious denomination with at least three years of full-time experience in the ministry.
 - 2. A police chaplain should be available to serve on a 24-hour, on-call basis, determined and governed by the Peer Support Director.
 - 3. A police chaplain shall not have any convictions of a criminal offense or any record of having previously engaged in criminal conduct. All chaplains shall successfully pass a background check before being assigned to the unit.
 - 4. A police chaplain must possess a valid driver's license.
- c. The Peer Support Director, the Chief of Police and the Administrative Bureau Commander must approve all police Chaplains.
- d. Police chaplains will assist employees when requested by the Peer Support Director, peer support team leader or other command or supervisory level officer, by providing emotional and spiritual support and guidance to the injured, ill, or distressed. This does not preclude an employee from

contacting a police chaplain directly for assistance or support. Chaplains typically provide support for the following events:

1. Officer involved Shootings
 2. Line of duty death or serious injury
 3. Off duty deaths, if requested
 4. Traffic Crashes involving injuries
 5. Incidents involving children (Deaths, school shootings etc.)
 6. Major disasters
 7. Opening and/or closing of prayers at police ceremonies
 8. Any police incident where a supervisor deems their assistance is needed
- e. Police chaplains are available to all employees and/or their families for counseling and/or spiritual support during times of crisis. Employees or family members may contact the police chaplain directly on personal need for services. Police chaplains will periodically meet with their respective Bureau Commander and attend roll calls and ride-a-longs in order to develop partnerships with employees.

h. NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE

- a. The Peer Support Director, Peer Support Team Leader shall be notified when a critical incident occurs involving an employee of the Department both sworn and non-sworn and shall coordinate all resources and make any additional notifications as appropriate.
- b. The Peer Support Director will coordinate with the Peer Support Team Leader, psychologist and Police Chaplain to determine the initial response. The peer support director will ensure the appropriate resources are available for the incident.
- c. Workers Comp Injury paperwork: Sworn personnel involved in critical incidents will have the Workers Comp Injury packet submitted on their behalf in order to facilitate any future claims involving Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This paper work will be completed and submitted by the Peer Support Director or supervisor designee. No action is required by the affected officer(s).

i. CONFIDENTIALITY

- a. Members of Peer Support Team, psychologist and police chaplains shall not disclose any information communicated to him by public safety personnel who are subject to ISS regarding a critical incident when established pursuant to subdivision A 13 of [VA Code § 32.1-111.3](#). Such information shall also be exempt from the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.
- b. It is mandatory that Peer Support Team members maintain strict confidentiality in all matters discussed in debriefing, meetings, etc. Members of the support team are mandated reports and must divulge under certain circumstances. The provisions of [VA Code §19.2-271.4](#) shall not apply when:
 1. Criminal activity is revealed.
 2. A member of the Peer Support Team is witness or a party to a critical incident that prompted the peer support services.
 3. A Peer Support Team member reveals the content of privileged information to prevent a crime against another or a threat to public safety.
 4. Privileged information reveals intent to defraud or deceive the investigation into a critical incident.

5. Information that would indicate that an individual poses a threat to themselves or others.
- c. Participants will be advised of the confidential nature of the meeting and the exceptions to confidentiality at the start of every meeting. Peer Support Team members who become aware of any exception will discuss the exception with the Peer Support Director, Administrative Bureau Commander or the Chief of Police.
 - d. Peer Support Team members shall not be routinely interviewed by investigative authorities concerning matters in which they obtained information as a direct result of their assignment as a Peer Support Team member. Absent exigent circumstances, requests to interview Peer Support Team members shall be directed to the Chief of Police.
 - e. Violations of the confidentiality will be a basis for Departmental administrative discipline.