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# University of Wisconsin–Madison Police

## Policy: 1.4

**SUBJECT: PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 02/15/15**

**REVISED DATE:**

**REVIEWED DATE:**

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1.4.1 PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

### **POLICY:**

The Department will provide all public safety employees within the Department the opportunity to receive emotional and tangible peer support through times of personal or professional crises and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

“Peer Support Partner”, sworn or non-sworn, is a specially trained colleague, not a counselor or therapist. Peer Support Partners (PSPs) augment the Employee Assistance Office but do not replace it. PSPs will refer cases that require professional intervention to a mental health professional.

### **PROCEDURE:**

#### **1.4.1 PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

The following shall govern the Department Peer Support Program procedures

- A. The program is overseen by the Personnel or Professional Standards Lieutenant and one Field Services Sergeant or Supervisor.
- B. PSPs will be chosen from volunteers who are in good standing (evaluation ratings of satisfactory or above) who have received recommendations from their supervisors and/or peers. Considerations for selection of PSP candidates include, but are not limited to, previous education and training; resolved traumatic experiences; and desirable personal qualities, such as maturity, judgment, and personal and professional credibility. Sworn PSPs are employees first and peer supporters second. Any conflicts of roles should be resolved in that context. PSPs cannot abdicate their job responsibility as employees by participating in the program. The peer support program is not an alternative to discipline. A PSP does not intervene in the disciplinary process, even upon request. Possible criteria to be removed from the program include breach of confidentiality; failure to attend training; or losing one’s good standing with the Department.
- C. PSPs will receive relevant introductory and continuing training for, including but not limited to the following: Confidentiality Issues, Communication Facilitation and Listening Skills, Ethical Issues, Problem-Solving Skills, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Cross-Cultural Issues, Stress Management, Suicide Assessment, Depression and Burn-Out, Grief Management, Domestic Violence, Crisis Management, Nonverbal Communication, When to Seek Mental Health Consultation and Referral Information, Traumatic Intervention, Limits and Liability. PSPs will be provided with a training and reference packet that will be approved by a mental health professional.
- D. PSPs will have a mental health professional with whom to consult. PSPs should be aware of their personal limitations and should seek advice and counsel in determining when to disqualify themselves from working with problems for which they have not been trained or problems about which they may have strong personal beliefs.
- E. PSPs will not be asked to give information about members they support. The only information that management may require about peer support cases is the anonymous statistical information regarding the utilization of a PSP.
- F. PSPs must inform Department members of the limits of their confidentiality. These should be consistent with the law as well as Departmental policy and may include the following; threats to self, threats to specific people, felonies or serious misdemeanors as specified by the Department, child, spouse, and elder abuse. PSPs must not volunteer information to supervisors and should advise supervisors of the confidentiality guidelines established by the Department. However, PSPs must notify the Peer Support Program Assistant Chief or Chief if anyone’s life is thought to be in danger. PSPs must advise members that information told to them is not protected by legal privilege and that confidentiality is administratively provided and may not be recognized in court proceedings. Any Department member can communicate with any PSP of their choosing.