



**General Order: 2.23
PEER SUPPORT TEAM**

Effective: December 4, 1997
Last Revised: August 6, 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish the duties and responsibilities of the Peer Support Team. The team will work in conjunction with the Department psychologist and assist police department personnel involved in traumatic incidents. This assistance may cover a range of duties from conducting debriefings with personnel involved in an incident, to providing comfort and assistance to involved persons, and to explaining investigative processes.

POLICY

The Department recognizes that traumatic events often cause feelings of anger, guilt, and helplessness, which affect the mental and physical health of employees. These feelings are often not understood and have an adverse affect on how employees perform their duties. In an attempt to minimize these problems, the Garden Grove Police Department has developed a Peer Support Team composed of department personnel, assigned the duty of assisting personnel involved in traumatic incidents. The Peer Support Team shall operate under the direction of the Administrative Services Commander and the supervision of the Professional Standards Lieutenant. The Peer Support Team shall have ongoing specified training from the Department Psychologist related to assisting personnel involved in traumatic incidents.

It is not the intent of this team to in any way hinder the investigation of officer-involved incidents. Peer Support Team members shall make every effort to cooperate with investigators in their duties.

PROCEDURE

The incident supervisor should contact the Peer Support Team. The team supervisor should then notify members of the team, as needed, to provide debriefing services.

Prior to contacting the affected employee(s), team members shall first contact the incident supervisor, or if unavailable, another on-duty police supervisor or

manager, and identify themselves and their role as members of the Peer Support Team. On-duty team members involved in the initial incident, immediately called for investigative follow-up, or otherwise involved in the incident shall not be part of the debriefing team.

The incident supervisor shall notify the Peer Support Team in the following situations:

1. Any incident when a psychologist debriefing is required by General Order 3.11.
 - Duty-related shooting incidents or aggravated assaults when the officer suffers a nonfatal gunshot wound, stab wound, or other serious injury resulting in hospitalization.
 - Duty-related shooting incidents resulting in the wounding of another person.
 - Duty-related shooting incidents resulting in the death of another person.
 - Duty-related traffic collisions resulting in fatal injuries to another person.
 - Duty-related traumatic incidents resulting in the death or serious injury of another person directly involved in the incident being handled by the on-scene officer.

NOTE: Use of the Peer Support Team is intended to support, not replace, the mandatory interview with the Department-recognized psychologist, for those officers involved in a shooting that results in injury or death to another person, per General Order 2.8.

2. When Department personnel have been involved in any incident that results in an emotional shock to the degree that substantial and lasting damage may occur. Such incidents may include, for example, the death of or serious injury to department personnel, exposure to an especially tragic or gruesome event, or a mass death situation.
3. Whenever the on-duty supervisor feels that it would be beneficial to the officer or employee involved to have contact with the Peer Support Team.
4. When requested by department personnel.

If the on-duty supervisor has any doubt as to whether the team should be called out, the Peer Support Team supervisor should be notified and consulted. The incident supervisor and Peer Support Team supervisor will decide if a response is appropriate.

The team supervisor will be responsible for activating as many members of the team as necessary to appropriately respond to the incident.

Department personnel involved in a traumatic incident may select a member of the Peer Support Team to assist them and every effort shall be made to have that member respond

CONFIDENTIALITY

While communication between an officer or employee and the department psychologist has been deemed confidential and privileged by the Evidence Code, communication between a member of the Peer Support Team and the person being debriefed may not be considered privileged by the courts. The Garden Grove Police Department considers these communications to be confidential.

It shall be mandatory that Peer Support Team members maintain strict confidentiality in matters discussed in trauma debriefings, and trauma meetings and training. Any statement to or discussion with Team members while acting in his/her Peer Support Team role shall remain confidential.

A law enforcement personnel, whether or not a party to an action, has a right to refuse to disclose, and to prevent another from disclosing, a confidential communication between the law enforcement personnel and a peer support member made while the peer support team member was providing peer support services, or a confidential communication made to a crisis hotline or crisis referral service. (California Penal Code 8669.4(a))

Pursuant to California Penal Code 8669.4(b), a confidential communication may be disclosed under the following circumstances:

- (1) To refer a law enforcement personnel to receive crisis referral services by a peer support team member.
- (2) During a consultation between two peer support team members.
- (3) If the peer support team member reasonably believes that disclosure is necessary to prevent death, substantial bodily harm, or commission of a crime.
- (4) If the law enforcement personnel expressly agrees in writing that the confidential communication may be disclosed.
- (5) In a criminal proceeding.
- (6) If otherwise required by law.

Peer Support Team members shall not discuss debriefings they have been involved in, who has been debriefed, or provide any information about the team's activities except in the instances listed above and then only after consultation with the Department psychologist.

The Peer Support Team is not an investigative unit of the Police Department; therefore, it will not be the policy of this department to question team members, or any other participant involved in a Peer Support Team debriefing, concerning the content of such discussion.

Pursuant to California Penal Code 8669.5(a), a Peer Support Team member shall not provide peer support services in any of the following circumstances:

(1) If, when serving in a peer support role, the peer support team member's relationship with a law enforcement personnel receiving peer support services could be reasonably expected to impair objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in providing peer support, or would otherwise risk exploitation or harm to the law enforcement personnel.

(2) If the peer support team member and the law enforcement personnel receiving peer support services were involved as participants or witnesses to the same traumatic incident.

(3) If the peer support team member and the law enforcement personnel receiving peer support services are both involved in a shared active or ongoing investigation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTATION

The Peer Support Team shall work in conjunction with the Department psychologist and at their direction. If the incident is such that the Department psychologist is not called out or does not respond, the lead Peer Support Team member will notify the Department psychologist of the call out and the reason for it. At the conclusion of the call out, the lead Peer Support Team member will notify the Professional Standards Lieutenant or the Administrative Services Bureau Commander prior to re-contacting the Department psychologist with the results of the call out.

Peer Support Team Training

The Peer Support Team is a voluntary position comprised of compassionate experienced individuals that want to assist other employees dealing with traumatic incidents in both their personal and professional lives. Once a team member is brought onto the Peer Support Team they will be required to attend a Basic Peer Support class identified by the Peer Support supervisor. Each team member will also be required to attend quarterly training put on by the contracted departmental psychologist.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

The Peer Support Team will have a supervisor who will be responsible for the administrative requirements of the team. This supervisor shall report only to a designated management liaison, generally the Administrative Services Bureau, due to the confidential nature of the team's responsibilities. The Peer Support Team Coordinator will be responsible for the following:

- Supervision and administrative duties of the team

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- Keep the Administrative Services Bureau Commander apprised of any call-outs or utilization of the team
- Arrange training for team members