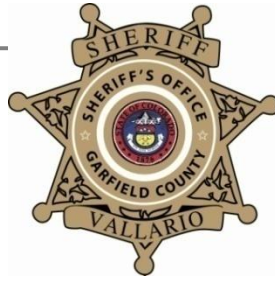


# SHERIFF OF GARFIELD COUNTY

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### GARFIELD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY/PROCEDURE GENERAL

**SUBJECT: CRITICAL INCIDENT PRE/POST MEMBER SUPPORT**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** January 01, 2024

**POLICY:**

This policy establishes a guideline to ensure the proper pre-incident training, psychological support and emotional care is available for a member and or his/her family Pre and Post critical incidents.

**PURPOSE:**

The Garfield County Sheriff's Office employs well over 140 full time employees. With an ever-growing community, the office and its members are encountering more incidents that we find may affect the members psychologically and emotionally.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Critical Incident:** An incident that has the potential to cause physical or mental injury. Examples of critical incidents may include but are not limited to:

- Shootings involving injury or death
- Law Enforcement involved shootings
- Death of a fellow or former employee
- Assault on an employee
- In Custody deaths
- Significant suicide attempt
- Employee hostage situations
- Vehicular crashes involving serious bodily injury or death
- Unusual catastrophic incidents such as aircraft crash, school bus crash, a fire, flood or other incident that causes loss of personal property, serious bodily injury or death

**Pre-Incident Services:** Are services that are available to members prior to any type of incident. These services include but not limited to Peer Support, Mental Health Counseling, and Employee Assistance Program.

**Post-Incident Services:** Are services that are available to a member, and his/her family post incident that can include but not limited to Peer Support, Critical Incident Debriefings, Follow-up Counseling, legal, and Employee Assistance Program.

**Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMPH):** Any individual who is licensed as a mental health professional, in good standing with his or her licensing board, has an in-depth understanding of law enforcement culture.

**Psychological Fit-For-Duty Evaluation (FFDE):** A formal, specialized examination of an incumbent employee that results from (1) objective evidence that the employee may be unable to safely or effectively perform a defined job and (2) a reasonable basis for believing that the cause may be attributable to a psychological condition or impairment. The central purpose of an FFDE is to determine whether the employee is able to safely and effectively perform his or her essential job functions, and is conducted by a licensed psychologist.

**Critical Incident Debrief:** A facilitator-led group process conducted soon after a traumatic event with individuals who were exposed to the incident. This process is intended to help individuals manage their normal stress reactions to abnormal events. Critical Incident Debriefing shall only be facilitated by a Senior Peer Advisor or Qualified Mental Health Professional.

**Defusing:** Is an intervention that is a shorter, less formal version of a debriefing conducted before individuals leave shift and conducted by line level supervisor or senior peer advisor. Defusing are not a substitute for Critical Incident Debrief, but are more used for line supervisor to gauge their shifts response to an incident. The Peer Support Commander, shall be updated on any defusing conducted by line level supervisor, to make sure any follow up care is scheduled.

## **METHOD:**

**PRE-INCIDENT:** Members may take advantage of services through the following avenues at no cost to the member.

- Peer Support
  - One on one peer support
  - Group peer support
  - Peer Support is a formal group of individuals consisting of approved members who have undergone training in peer support methods. They provide a non-professional interaction that is based upon a common experiences or history. Please reference the Peer Support Team Policy for further information.
  
- Employee Assistance Program
  - Mental health counseling three sessions per issue
  - Legal counseling and referral program
  - Financial counseling and planning services

- Sheriff's Office Public Safety Psychological Services
  - Counseling session in person or telehealth with a qualified public safety provider
- Psychological Wellness Check-in: For Victim Response Team members, Investigators, and Forensic Technicians whose job requires ongoing contact with disturbing and/or graphic material, a baseline appointment will be scheduled with our contract Psychologist at the Sheriff's Office expense, to be followed by annual appointments thereafter. Additional appointments may be required as determined by Supervisors, the Undersheriff or Sheriff.
- Sheriff's Office Pre-Incident Training:
  - The Sheriff's Office offers at least one training annually to educate employees about post-traumatic reactions and effects associated with involvement and exposure to critical incidents.

**POST-INCIDENT:** Members and their family who are involved in a Critical Incident will have the Pre-Incident services available to them; however, will additionally be subject to the following Post-Incident Services.

- At the time of a critical incident, the member(s) involved shall be assigned a peer advisor.
- Peer Support
  - One on one peer support
  - Group peer support
  - Peer Support is a formal group of individuals consisting of approved members who have undergone training in peer support methods. They provide a non-professional interaction that is based upon a common experiences or history. Please reference the Peer Support Team Policy for further information.
- If applicable, the peer support commander shall coordinate to schedule a confidential critical incident debrief preferably within 48 to 72 hours of the incident. This debrief shall be for emotional and mental health only. Operational debriefs shall only be scheduled after the emotional welfare of the members have been assessed.
  - All members involved in the incident shall attend unless directed by the Sheriff or his/her designee.
  - Members who wish to debrief with their family members may do so after the debrief.
  - The peer support team shall work with the mental health provider conducting the debriefing to identify any additional member's needs and assure members are supported during, and after the debriefing.
- Members involved in a firearm discharge regardless of injury or death shall seek wellness check-ins with the designated agency psychologist at the following intervals.

The following wellness requirements are over and above any fit-for-duty exams.

- Within five days of incident
- Three months from first check-in
- Six months from first check-in
- One year from first check-in
- The wellness check-ins do not preclude the member from seeking additional sessions from the agency's Public Safety Psychological Services provider after the incident if the member feels the assistance would be of benefit.
  - The three, six and one year check-ins are merely a minimum standard that members should expect following an incident.

- The Sheriff or his/her designee may place the member's involved in the incident on leave from regular duty for their welfare, and investigatory requirements. Leave for emotional or mental health welfare is not punishment but for the members benefit.
  - The assigned peer advisor will assist the member with integration back from leave, to include but not limited to returning to the incident location, shooting range, etc. to assist in a smooth transition back to full duty.
- Employee Assistance Program
  - Confidential mental health counseling for the employee and their family with a QMHP immediately following the incident. The employee and their family may attend up to three sessions free of charge for each incident. These services are offered separate and distinct from fit-for-duty services, and the current internal in-house counseling services available
  - Legal counseling and referral program.
  - Financial counseling and planning services.