

SHERIFF OF GARFIELD COUNTY

LOU VALLARIO

107 8TH Street
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601
Phone: 970-945-0453
Fax: 970-945-6430



106 County Road 333-A
Rifle, CO 81650
Phone: 970-665-0200
Fax: 970-665-0253

GARFIELD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY / PROCEDURE GENERAL

SUBJECT: PEER SUPPORT TEAM

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 01, 2024

POLICY:

The Peer Support Team (PST) provides peer support to personnel experiencing daily personal and/or work related stress and also in conjunction with the Trauma Team following traumatic incidents resulting from performance of duty.

PURPOSE:

Garfield County Sheriff's Office provides assistance to all employees in order to promote the health and well being of employees who are exposed to critical incident stress and/or personal stress so that they might return to their former level of functioning as soon as possible after such exposure.

DEFINITIONS:

Peer Advisor: A Peer Advisor is a Garfield County Sheriff's Office employee who may hold a rank of Corporal or below and who is selected and trained to provide a first line of assistance and basic crisis intervention to fellow employees.

Contract Mental Health provider: A licensed mental health provider contracted to the agency to assist Peer Advisors with peer support contacts and to work in conjunction with the Peer Support Coordinator on training.

Peer Support Team Coordinator: A Peer Advisor that is selected by the Sheriff or his designee to coordinate all PST services to include team meetings, trainings, call outs and any other duty assigned by the Sheriff or his designee.

METHODS:

The team provides personal contact as follows:

- A. Self Referral: Any employee may request PST assistance for personal or professional matters.
- B. Supervisor Referral: Supervisors may refer personnel to the on call PST Advisor or PST Coordinator for assignment to the appropriate Peer Advisor.

- C. Reach-Out: PST members may provide follow-up personal contact on a one-on-one basis to any employee(s) who is involved in a traumatic incident, or provide personal support to employee(s) as needed.
- D. On-call Status: PST Advisors work on an on-call basis and are available to provide immediate peer support.

Peer Support Confidentiality:

PST member confidentiality is specified under Colorado Revised Statute 13-90-107 (m) (I), who may not testify without consent. Individual (one-on-one) interactions are protected under this statute, group interactions are not. Additionally, there are several other circumstances wherein information obtained by PST member is not confidential. Information received or provided to a PST member is not confidential under section A, B, C, D, E and the Sheriff's Office Drug Testing Policy. Peer Advisors and employees seeking peer support should be aware of the confidential limitations.

Per Colorado Revised Statute 13-90-107:

(m)

(I) A law enforcement or firefighter peer support team member shall not be examined without the consent of the person to whom peer support services have been provided as to any communication made by the person to the peer support team member under the circumstances described in subsection (1)(m)(III) of this section; nor shall a recipient of peer support services be examined as to any such communication without the recipient's consent.

(I.5) An emergency medical service provider or rescue unit peer support team member shall not be examined without the consent of the person to whom peer support services have been provided as to any communication made by the person to the peer support team member under the circumstances described in subsection (1)(m)(III) of this section; nor shall a recipient of peer support services be examined as to any such communication without the recipient's consent.

(I.6) A district attorney or public defender peer support team member shall not be examined without the consent of the person to whom peer support services have been provided as to any communication made by the person to the peer support team member under the circumstances described in subsection (1)(m)(III) of this section; nor shall a recipient of peer support services be examined as to any such communication without the recipient's consent.

(II) As used in this subsection (1)(m):

(A) "Communication" means an oral statement, written statement, note, record, report, or document made during, or arising out of, a meeting with a peer support team member.

(A.3) "District attorney or public defender peer support team member" means an employee of a district attorney's office or a public defender's office who has been trained in peer support skills and who is officially designated by a district attorney or the state public defender as a member of a district attorney's office peer support team or an office of the state public defender peer support team.

(A.5) "Emergency medical service provider or rescue unit peer support team member" means an emergency medical service provider, as defined in section 25-3.5-103 (8), C.R.S., a regular or volunteer member of a rescue unit, as defined in section 25-3.5-103 (11), C.R.S., or other person who has been trained in peer support skills and who is officially designated by the supervisor of an emergency medical service agency as defined in section 25-3.5-103 (11.5), C.R.S., or a chief of a rescue unit as a member of an emergency medical service provider's peer support team or rescue unit's peer support team.

(B) “Law enforcement or firefighter peer support team member” means a peace officer, civilian employee, or volunteer member of a law enforcement agency or a regular or volunteer member of a fire department or other person who has been trained in peer support skills and who is officially designated by a police chief, the chief of the Colorado state patrol, a sheriff, or a fire chief as a member of a law enforcement agency’s peer support team or a fire department’s peer support team.

(III) This subsection (1)(m) applies only to communications made during interactions conducted by a peer support team member:

(A) Acting in the person’s official capacity as a law enforcement or firefighter peer support team member, emergency medical service provider or rescue unit peer support team member, or district attorney or public defender peer support team member; and

(B) Functioning within the written peer support guidelines that are in effect for the person’s respective law enforcement agency, fire department, emergency medical service agency, rescue unit, district attorney’s office, or public defender’s office.

(IV) This subsection (1)(m) does not apply in cases in which:

(A) A law enforcement or firefighter peer support team member, emergency medical service provider or rescue unit peer support team member, or district attorney or public defender peer support team member was a witness or a party to an incident which prompted the delivery of peer support services;

(B) Information received by a peer support team member is indicative of actual or suspected child abuse, as described in section 18-6-401; actual or suspected child neglect, as described in section 19-3-102; or actual or suspected crimes against at-risk persons, as described in section 18-6.5-103;

(C) Due to intoxication by alcohol, being under the influence of drugs, or incapacitation by substances as described in section 27-81-111, the person receiving peer support is a clear and immediate danger to the person’s self or others;

(D) There is reasonable cause to believe that the person receiving peer support has a mental health disorder and, due to the mental health disorder, is an imminent threat to himself or herself or others or is gravely disabled as defined in section 27-65-102; or

(E) There is information indicative of any criminal conduct.

Any violation or suspected violation of the agencies Drug Testing Policy, to include the illegal, unauthorized use, misuse and/or abuse of prescription medications.

PST members are subject to all other disclosures mandated by law. Peace Officer members of the PST are required to take action, including arrest, in domestic violence cases where there is probable cause that a crime has been committed (C.R.S. 18-6-803.6).

Employees seeking out these services should be aware that Peer Support Services are not meant to take place of professional counseling services but is merely an additional avenue to seek assistance and resource.

The duties and responsibilities of the selected members are detailed in the Sheriff’s Office Peer Support Team Manual. No part of the Peer Support Team Manual should be considered legally or morally binding on the Sheriff or his designee and is intended to be a living document and is to be updated as the Sheriff sees fit.