



Denver 9-1-1

Peer Support Handbook

Mission

To best support our employees through a difficult career, we will be knowledgeable, approachable, confidential, and engaged in helping our peers the best they can be. Through empathy, compassion, education, and training, we pledge to provide appropriate resources and support to any peer. We will therefore create a culture of work-life balance, mental health, and overall wellness. This includes all areas of a person's life, not solely their professional workplace.

Purpose

The peer support team will provide training, counseling referrals, and critical incident response to all agency personnel and their family members. Our primary goal is to assist employees with resilience, offering guidance and support during challenging situations both related and unrelated to work, and reduce the turnover rate of new employees as they adjust to a high stress profession. The team will commit to promoting self-care, availability of resources, and will conduct themselves in a manner that will help break the stigma of asking for help.

Confidentiality

All peer support members are subject to Colorado Statute [C.R.S 13-90-107m](#) as well as department policy. A peer support member is legally bound to uphold strict confidentiality, except for the following situations in which we are mandated to report:

- Suicidal or homicidal ideations where there is imminent danger to self or others
- Criminal behavior that poses immediate danger to self or others
- Circumstances where a peer support member is witness or party to a critical or life-safety error in the workplace (i.e. where we would be required to testify)

- Mandatory report requirement: abuse, neglect, or exploitation to include domestic violence, elder or at risk-adult, children

**Failure to report incidents mentioned in the exceptions to the confidentiality rule will also result in immediate dismissal from the program indefinitely.*

To ensure the integrity of the confidentiality rules, a peer supporter shall inform the person, prior to discussion, what the limitations and the exceptions are regarding the information revealed.

It may occur that a member is assisting an individual who is or becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation. In such cases, they should always adhere to the confidentiality policy, and should not volunteer any information received in confidence. However, members may not interfere with the investigation or shelter peers from investigation. The peer supporter in these cases is providing support through the stress the employee may face during a disciplinary process.

Roles and Responsibilities

Program coordinators:

Coordinators act as the primary liaison between members, resource persons, and Denver 9-1-1 administration. The coordinator serves as the link to ensure that the program is being managed by the members in accordance with the goals and objectives established for the program.

Duties include:

- Supervise the program and ensure compliance with department policy
- Schedule and facilitate meetings
- Authorize overtime of members, if warranted
- Initiate contacts following critical incidents
- Recruit and screen peer support applicants
- Serve as liaison with Denver Police Peer Support
- Stay abreast of resources, trainings, trends, and data related to peer support, mental health, and wellness
- Will be available for critical incidents, and will coordinate members to respond where needed via team text/phone call

Members and Specialists:

All members must agree to follow rules and regulations established by the group, especially regarding confidentiality. Team members are vital elements in the peer support process and must be willing to attend scheduled meetings, assist with debriefings if necessary, and respond to the communications center during a critical incident.

- **Peer support member** refers to anyone who has applied and been accepted into the program
- **Peer support specialist** refers to those who have completed the 40-hour certification training

Duties include:

- Attend trainings and meetings
- Ensure all contact information is up-to-date, and understand that you are signing up to be contacted both on and off shift.
- Initiate contacts with peers, and track contact/projects
- Create newsletters, bulletin boards, and teach academy burnout prevention classes
- Set the example for professional conduct on and off the phone/channel, promote self-care, and create a positive work environment
- Maintain working relationships with all employees, and be able to refer them to resources as needed.
- Ensure there is no documentation or notes of contacts in order to keep information completely confidential (i.e. no emails, recorded phone calls, etc). Communication in person or via text/personal phone call is preferred.
- Individual behavior and how we are perceived is incredibly important to the success of this program. If a peer support member is thought to be a gossip or untrustworthy by their peers, they are subject to permanent removal from the program.

Member Selection Process

Whenever a potential new member is identified, they should be referred to the coordinators to fill out an application and discuss the mission and goals of the group. The coordinators will review applications, meet with the candidate, and approve or deny applicants.

Qualified candidates are:

- Individuals not currently on probation
- Agree to maintain confidentiality
- Be empathetic and possess interpersonal and communication skills
- Must be willing to attend and successfully complete training programs

Annual Recommitment

Once a year the coordinators will send a re-commitment email or poll asking each person if they are still interested in being a peer support member or specialist. Any member wishing to resign may do so at any time, but this will provide an annual check-in.

Clinical Supervision

The peer support team recognizes that we are not licensed clinical professionals, and shall not attempt to provide counseling services to our employees. 24-hour consultation services will be available from specially trained Police and Public Safety Psychology experts, and members will be aware of how to contact them in a crisis. The coordinators will establish a relationship with a clinical supervisor to ensure best practices and standards are followed.

Training and Certification

The peer support coordinators will make every effort to certify each member in a reasonable timeframe, however this requires members to be flexible to attend a 40-hour training when it comes available, as opportunities are very limited.

Continuing education is highly encouraged and is the responsibility of each member. Members will share in the Teams chat or group text any opportunities, articles, webinars, classes, etc. as they come across them.



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