

Peer Support and Assistance Program

1033.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department recognizes the value of providing an in-house resource for Members and their family members to support them in managing both professional and personal crises. The purpose of this directive is to establish policy related to a Peer Support Team for Department Members and their families.

The Peer Support Team (PST) may be utilized to support other county law enforcement agencies and to work in cooperation with the Orange County Association of Peer Supporters (OCAPS) in mitigating trauma in the aftermath of an incident that impacts law enforcement personnel and/or the community.

The PST has boundaries that must be acknowledged while providing support to personnel. Interactions with team members and Members shall not supplant a counseling session with a licensed mental health professional in response to a Member suffering the effects of a traumatic critical event. Team members shall not interfere with or influence the initial triage of a traumatic critical event as the Department renders the situation safe and determines a course of action.

1033.2 ROLE OF PROGRAM

The PST provides assistance, support, and resources to Members and direct family members during difficult times in their personal or professional lives. This program is designed to:

1. Provide emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to other Members who need assistance;
2. Provide ongoing follow-up support;
3. Promote trust, allow anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons using peer support within the guidelines of the program;
4. Develop team members who can identify personal conflicts and provide guidance and/or referrals to an appropriate professional or to alternate resources as assessed or required;
5. Maintain an effective PST through ongoing training and regular scheduled team meetings;
6. Provide a mechanism of support and resources to Members on approved leave; and
7. Act as a liaison for retired Members requesting PST services.

1033.3 MISSION STATEMENT

The role of the Orange County Sheriff's Department Peer Support Team is to support and refer Members and family members to resources and assistance during difficult times in their professional and personal lives.

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1033.4 ACCESSING PEER SUPPORT

The PST is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to all Members. PST contact information can be found on the Department's Intranet Page via the PST link in the Employee Center.

1033.5 CONFIDENTIALITY

The acceptance and success of the Orange County Sheriff's Department PST will be determined greatly by the preservation of confidentiality. It is imperative each PST member maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual within the guidelines of this policy.

All PST Members will be required to read, understand, and abide by the terms of the Confidentiality Agreement. The PST Member (or other approved person(s) as described in §1033.6 shall submit the signed original Confidentiality Agreement form to the PST Program Administrator prior to becoming a team member. The PST Program Administrator shall retain the signed original Confidentiality Agreements. The PST Confidentiality Agreement form will be accessible in the Document Center on the OCSD Intranet.

Conversations between PST members and Members are not legally privileged communications. As a result, courts may compel disclosure of this information or it may otherwise be discovered in litigation. However, the Department shall maintain the confidentiality of communications between PST Members and Members receiving peer support services, with the following exceptions:

1. Information concerning the commission of a crime, or the intent to defraud or deceive an investigation into a critical incident;
2. There is a safety concern for the Member or others;
3. Disclosure has been compelled by a court of competent jurisdiction;
4. In a criminal proceeding;
5. Concerning information that an employee, intern, volunteer, applicant, or contract worker has been subjected to harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation if a supervisor or manager has received such information;
6. To allow a PST Member to consult with another PST Member, or to make an appropriate referral for a Member to receive services from a licensed mental health professional, in which case the mental health professional will maintain strict confidentiality;
7. If the Member agrees in writing that the confidential communication may be disclosed;
or
8. When disclosure is otherwise required by law.

PST personnel are required to timely contact the Department's Peer Support Program Administrator who will then disclose to the Training Division Commander any information they receive that indicates there is a safety concern for a Member or others, as well as any information

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they receive concerning the commission of a crime, or the intent to defraud or deceive an investigation into a critical incident.

**As required by the County's Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy and Procedure and Department Policy 328, any PST member who is a supervisor or manager and who receives information that a Member has been subjected to harassment, discrimination or retaliation will disclose that information to the PST Program Administrator or Training Division Commander.*

1033.6 COMMAND STRUCTURE

The PST is a function under the Command of the Training Division Commander. The leadership structure of the Peer Support Program shall be as follows:

1. **Program Administrator:** Peer Support Coordinator.
2. **Program Co-Coordinator(s):** Co-Coordinators are responsible for the coordination, statistics and operations of the PST. Co-Coordinators will work directly with the Program Administrator in charge.
3. **Peer Support Team Members:** PST members shall be selected from Department personnel (or other individuals as deemed appropriate and approved by the Program Co-Coordinator and Program Administrator) through a recruitment/nomination and interview process. Members shall attend a POST-certified Basic Peer Support Training Course. Team members shall be required to attend bimonthly meetings and uphold confidentiality as stated in Lexipol Policy 1033.5. Members of the PST may be removed from the team at the direction of the Program Administrator or Training Division Commander.
4. **Non-Active Department Members/Others:** All non-active Department Members (retired/separated/other) selected for the program by the Program Co-Coordinators and Program Administrator must be approved by the Department for appointment as Reserve Deputy Sheriff or Professional Services Responder (PSR) prior to being eligible to participate as PST Members.

1033.7 CRITICAL INCIDENTS

1033.7.1 POLICY

The PST is intended to be a resource available to the Department in the event of a critical incident or for personal crisis situations. PST outreach can occur for the following reasons:

1. All shootings (regardless of whether someone is injured or killed).
2. Where a Member witnesses another Member's death or serious injury.
3. Where a Member is taken hostage.
4. Where a Member is witness to a suicide.
5. Where a Member is witness to a violent death or serious injury.
6. Infant/child death.

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7. Where a Member witnesses or responds to a mass shooting incident.
8. Any incident that is likely to affect the Member's ability to interact with the public or is a potential officer safety risk.
9. Any other incident deemed appropriate by the Department Commander.
10. Referral from a supervisor.
11. Self-referral for help.

1033.7.2 POST INCIDENT PROCEDURES

1. The respective Commander or Director of the involved Division shall call one of the Department's Peer Support Co-Coordinators as soon as possible to assess the situation. The Peer Support Co-Coordinator shall initiate an operational response.
2. The Peer Support Co-Coordinator shall work with the supervisor of impacted Members so a Member of the PST can be contacted as soon as possible in order to schedule a one-on-one or group debriefing for all involved Members. When practical and operationally safe to do so, the on-scene supervisor shall serve as a resource for team members needing information about the incident so that appropriate PST resources are made available.
3. All involved Members are encouraged to attend a one-on-one or group debriefing provided by the Peer Support Co-Coordinator and PST members. Attendance or participation is considered voluntary.
4. The Department encourages family members of the involved personnel to take advantage of available mental health counseling services. It is recommended that family counseling be offered to Members as needed following a critical incident.

1033.8 TRAINING

During the basic certification course, PST members shall receive training on subjects that may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Precrisis education.
2. Critical incident stress defusings.
3. Critical incident stress debriefings.
4. On-scene support services.
5. One-on-one support services.
6. Consultation.
7. Referral services.
8. Confidentiality obligations.
9. The impact of toxic stress on health and well being.
10. Grief support
11. Substance abuse awareness and approaches.

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12. Active listening skills.
13. Stress management.
14. Psychological first aid.

Additional training available to Peer Support Team Members:

1. Basic Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Course.
2. Bimonthly PST meetings shall provide ongoing training on a number of subjects as it relates to the emotional wellbeing of Department Members.