

Peer Support Program

*The Southern California CISM Team...aka...
The Counseling Team International (TCTI)*

Dedicated to Serving Those Who Serve



Purpose...

Peer support provides a way for employees and their family members to confidentially talk about personal/professional problems with specially trained coworkers who understand and want to help.

Peer supporters are para-professionals whose primary function is to **listen, assess** and whenever necessary, **refer** to professional Mental Health Professionals (MHPs). They should never be used as a replacement for required professional care.



A peer support program complements services already provided by outside professionals. The program expands available resources by offering a greater field of choice to personnel who want to talk to someone who has “been there” and understands what it is like to work “their jobs”.

History...

Peer support programs began in **public service** organizations in Chicago in 1955, as an approach to dealing with employees’ drug and alcohol problems. The earliest recorded use of peer support in **emergency service** is the Los Angeles Police Department, which established a program in 1981, following an officer-involved shooting incident. Since then, emergency services have been at the forefront of developing peer support program services.

TCTI began actively training peer supporters in 1987 and continues to provide a 3-day conference.

TCTI also co-founded California Peer Support Association (CPSA) in 1995.

Guidelines...

Ideally, peer support programs are developed and implemented under the organizational structure of the parent agency. For a peer support program to work effectively, it must have support from the highest levels within an organization.

These guidelines are intended to provide information and recommendations on forming and maintaining a peer support structure for sworn and civilian personnel in law enforcement agencies.

Sample Peer Support Guidelines are available upon request.

See contact information below...

These guidelines are not meant to be a rigid protocol but reflect the commonly accepted practices of the IACP Psychological Services Section members and the agencies they serve. The guidelines work best when applied appropriately to each individual and agency situation.

Over 



Qualities and Skills...

A few recommended personal qualities and skills of a peer supporter:

- Humility, modesty, integrity, respect, sympathy and curiosity about people
- A sincere appreciation of people
- Satisfaction in being with, listening to and trying to understand people and society
- The ability to take a passive role
- A sense of humor
- Empathy while maintaining emotional stability
- Non-judgmental



Agency Benefits...

Most emergency service agencies or private industries realize the benefits of providing a way for employees to overcome their problems before they affect job performance. Benefits include:

- Decreased absenteeism
- Reduced accidents
- Positive affects on morale
- Increased productivity
- Cost effectiveness

“A peer support team can reduce the daily stress of police work and the emotional impact of critical incidents, preventing the buildup of anger, frustration and despair.”

Drs. Cohen, Hirsh and Katz

Manhattan Counseling and Psychotherapy Associates, LLC

Testimonials...

“The Peer Support Program is a valuable asset to our department, providing a bridge between our professional Mental Health Professionals and the support group. My staff and I would encourage the use of the Peer Support Program whenever the need arises.”

Sheriff Rod Hoops

San Bernardino Sheriff's Department

As a chief of police, I greatly value Peer Support as an essential element of a healthy organization. Agencies large and small feel the impacts of critical incident stress and need strategies for management of those stressors. This is a skill set that needs to be endorsed by police leaders, supported within a department, and nurtured and reinforced continually. The Los Gatos/Monte Sereno Police Department owes much of its success to our long-standing partnership with Dr. Bohl-Penrod for program creation, on-going guidance and support and periodic on-site professional consulting.

Chief Scott Seaman

Los Gatos Police Department

Training...

This 3-day conference brings together peer supporters that have been selected by their departments or agencies, on a volunteer basis, from all ranks and positions within the workplace.

24 CEUs Available!

Board of Behavioral Sciences Provider # PCE 2630

POST - Certification # 7180-10560 (Plan III)

STC - Certification # 874-2032

ICEMA - Certification # 62-2032 - Fire Personnel

Conference topics:

- Substance Abuse
- Dealing with Depression
- Grief and Bereavement
- Relationship Issues
- Managing a Line-of-Duty Death
- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Dealing with the Suicide Situation
- And more...