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## Officer Wellness Program

### 1025.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

It is the policy of the Bay Area Rapid Transit Police Department to assist and support employees who have been involved in a critical incident or are experiencing acute or chronic stress. This support may include, but is not limited to:

- (a) traumatic event/critical incident education
- (b) use of the Peer Support Team or individual Peer Support Team members
- (c) defusing and/or debriefing activities
- (d) support of family members
- (e) referral to appropriate professional resources

The purpose of the Officer Wellness Program is to minimize the physical, emotional, and psychological reactions to stress. The program aims to achieve this by providing necessary and appropriate resources and information on employee benefits and help and guidance for employees and their families who have been involved in a critical incident, injury or death, and/or are experiencing acute or chronic stress.

This program is intended to work in conjunction with, and not supersede access to, the District's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

The Law Enforcement Peer Support and Crisis Referral Services Program (Government Code § 8669.1) was added into California law on January 1, 2020. The law provides specific legal protections to law enforcement personnel receiving or providing Peer Support services.

### 1025.2 DEFINITIONS

- (a) **Traumatic Event/Critical Incident:** Directly experiencing or witnessing actual or threatened death or serious injury or experiencing a threat to one's own physical integrity or the physical integrity of someone else. Any event that may temporarily overwhelm an individual's usual methods of coping or produce unusually strong reactions. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. Officer Involved Shootings
  - 2. First responder death
  - 3. Serious injury to employee(s)
  - 4. Employee suicide
  - 5. Traumatic death, serious injury or significant event involving a child
  - 6. Victim personally known to employee
  - 7. Multiple homicides
  - 8. Death of person in police custody

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9. Injury or death of a civilian as a result of operational procedures
- (b) **First Responder Support Network (FRSN):** FRSN is a professional and educational organization, dedicated to providing first responders and their families tools to reduce the effects of traumatic stress.
  - (c) **International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF):** ICISF is a worldwide organization dedicated to the prevention and mitigation of disabling stress through education, training and support services for all emergency services professions.
  - (d) **Peer Support Team:** A team comprised of BART Police Department employees of various ranks who will provide support and referral to employees to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of stress.
  - (e) **Peer Support Team Member:** An employee trained to provide support and referrals for employees of the BART Police Department.
  - (f) **Peer Support Team Coordinators:** Sergeants who will be appointed by the Peer Support Team Manager, who will coordinate team training, communicate with the team's designated Mental Health Professional, ensure appropriate team deployment, track follow-up services, and perform other administrative duties related to the Peer Support Team.
  - (g) **Peer Support Team Manager:** A Command Staff member, appointed by the Chief of Police, will be responsible for providing overall management and direction over the budget, training, and deployment of the Peer Support Team.
  - (h) **Mental Health Professional:** A licensed mental health professional who has specific expertise, experience, education and training in the field of critical incident stress management with special emphasis on public safety personnel, who is a designated consultant retained by the BART Police Department for the Officer Wellness Program
  - (i) **Critical Incident Stress Debriefings, Defusings and/or Demobilizations (CISD):** Different types of meetings designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event, prevent the subsequent development of post-traumatic stress disorder, and serve as an early identification mechanism for individuals who may require professional mental health follow-up. Debriefings, Defusings and Demobilizations are structured group meetings or discussions during which personnel are given an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and reactions concerning a traumatic event in a controlled environment under the direction of a mental health professional and/or peer support personnel.
    - 1. **Debriefing:** The debriefing is a process that should be conducted within 72-hours of the traumatic event. It is led by a qualified mental health professional assisted by Peer Support Team Members.
    - 2. **Defusing:** A shortened version of the debriefing, generally lasting less than one hour. A defusing is a process that should take place as soon as possible after the traumatic event (usually within 3-8 hours, and ideally before the end of shift). The defusing may be used to determine the need for debriefing and/or other services and are typically conducted by a Peer Support Team Member.

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3. Demobilization: A brief informational session applied when operational units have been released from service at a major incident/disaster that requires unusually large numbers of personnel or lengthy periods of deployment. It serves a secondary function as a screening opportunity to assure that individuals who may need assistance are identified early after a traumatic event.
- (j) **Peer Support:** A process by which trained personnel provide emotional support and referrals for a colleague during a crisis or when they are under stress. Generally, peer support is sought by the employee in need, or suggested by the employee's peer(s) or supervisor(s). Peer support does not replace the need for structured group intervention following a critical incident. Peer support is not a replacement for the Department's contracted Employee Assistance Program (EAP) but can serve a role in assisting the employee seeking peer support with access to professional mental health services.
- (k) **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** The BART Police Department Employee Assistance Program is a consulting/counseling service for a variety of personal issues, separate from traumatic events experienced in the line of duty. The EAP is a provided benefit to all permanent District employees and provides services such as counseling, legal consultation, financial services, dependent care referrals, discounted access to treatment programs, and referral to community resources.
- (l) **CordicoShield Law Enforcement Wellness App:** The CordicoShield phone app enables the BART Police Department to provide customized and confidential mobile wellness resources designed to support both employees and the Peer Support Team. The app includes a complete range of self-assessment tools, videos and guides on behavioral health, and connections to confidential assessments and counseling resources. Employees can also view profiles and communicate one-on-one with Peer Support Team Members. The app is also available for use by an employees' families.

#### 1025.3 INITIATION OF GROUP PEER SUPPORT TEAM RESPONSE

- (a) Trauma takes a variety of forms and cannot be accurately or exhaustively quantified by description. However, certain events are of such magnitude that they impact nearly everyone involved. When such incidents occur a Peer Support or Critical Incident response may be initiated. For the purposes of BART Police Department response criteria, these incidents are defined as follows:
  1. Line of duty death
  2. Serious line of duty injury
  3. Suicide of a Public Safety employee
  4. Off-duty employee death
  5. Disaster
  6. Multi-casualty incident
  7. Officer-involved shooting
- (b) Additional incidents that may warrant group Peer Support team call-out include, but are not limited to:

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1. Death of a person in police custody
  2. Serious injury or death of a civilian as a result of operational procedures
  3. Significant events involving children
  4. Victim of serious crime or accident known to employee(s)
  5. Excessive media interest portraying employee(s) in a negative manner
- (c) The Watch/Incident Commander shall ensure the on-call Peer Support Team Coordinator is notified. The Peer Support Team Coordinator may notify the team's contracted Mental Health Professional for consultation. The type of intervention and response will be assessed and if appropriate, a Peer Support or Critical Incident response will be initiated.
- (d) In consultation with the Peer Support Team Manager, the Peer Support Team Coordinator will discuss the possibility of a group CISD with the Watch/Incident Commander, who will make the final determination.
- (e) The effectiveness of this program is dependent upon a consistent, Departmental response to traumatic events, to reduce the physical, psychological and emotional impact of such events upon our employees, and to mitigate the effects of post-traumatic stress.
- (f) The critical incident stress debriefing or defusing (CISD) should include all Department personnel directly involved in the incident.
- (g) While a non-affected employee may be required to attend a CISD, active participation is not mandatory. However, employees are reminded that non-affected or moderately-affected employees may have vital information/perspective that could help a fellow employee better understand an incident.

#### **1025.4 INITIATION OF INDIVIDUAL PEER SUPPORT RESPONSE**

- (a) One-on-one peer support is the crux of this program, with group intervention being used only for the most traumatic events. Any employee in need of peer support assistance may contact a Peer Support Team member of their choosing for such support. Peer Support Team members' contact information shall be available via the G:/ drive in the Officer Wellness Folder.
- (b) Members of the Peer Support Team shall not engage in psychological or personal counseling as defined in Business & Professions Code § 2903 and shall refer employees to professional assistance when appropriate. Examples of situations requiring professional referral include, but are not limited to:
1. Alcohol and/or substance abuse issues
  2. Suicidal thoughts or extreme depression

#### **1025.5 TEAM COMPOSITION**

- (a) The BART Police Department Peer Support Team is comprised of personnel representing various ranks of sworn and civilian members who have specialized

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training in assisting peers and their families with the immediate adverse effects of a traumatic event and a broad range of emotional and professional issues.

- (b) Peer Support Team members shall be made available on a 24-hour basis.
- (c) Being a member of the Peer Support Team is voluntary. In most cases, peer support should take the form of an on-duty meeting of a relatively short duration. Prolonged peer support, such as debriefings or defusings, should be scheduled on-duty when possible.
- (d) Peer Support Team Members shall be compensated only under the following circumstances, and only with the prior approval of the Peer Support Team Manager:
  - 1. Scheduled team training
  - 2. Mandatory meetings
  - 3. CISD's

#### **1025.6 TEAM SELECTION AND REQUIRED TRAINING**

- (a) Peer Support Team Members will be chosen based on the following criteria:
  - 1. A BART Police Department peer driven selection process consisting of memorandums submitted by department personnel nominating potential Peer Support Team Members
  - 2. Expressed desire to be a Peer Support Team Member
  - 3. Minimum commitment of three (3) years
  - 4. No work restrictions involving psychological stress
  - 5. Must be a member of the BART PD Police Department who has successfully completed probation
  - 6. Must consistently display solid judgment and discretion in sensitive matters
  - 7. Must display empathy and have strong interpersonal communication skills
- (b) Team selection will be reviewed by Command Staff with the final selection made by the Peer Support Team Manager
- (c) Peer Support Team Members shall receive the following training prior to providing services as a team member:
  - 1. Post Approved Peer Support Training
- (d) Team members may also receive the following training:
  - 1. Intermediate or Advanced Peer Support Course
  - 2. Intermediate or Advanced Critical Incident Stress Management Course
  - 3. COPS Traumas of Law Enforcement Course
- (e) Peer Support Team members should also attend quarterly in-house team training with the teams' Mental Health Professional and Peer Support Team Coordinator(s) (minimum of 4-hours)

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- (f) The Peer Support Team Manager shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with FRSN and Government Code § 8669.1.

#### **1025.7 CONFIDENTIALITY**

- (a) A critical responsibility of Peer Support Team Members is the promotion of trust, anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, communications between Peer Support Team Members and law enforcement personnel receiving Peer Support services are considered privileged and confidential by both the BART Police Department and the State of California (Government Code § 8669.1). The legally provided protections allow law enforcement personnel, whether or not they were/are involved, to refuse and/or prevent the disclosure of communications between Peer Support Team Members and personnel receiving Peer Support Team services, except, but not limited to, the following circumstances (Government Code § 8669.4):
  1. If the Peer Support Team Member reasonably believes disclosure is necessary to prevent death, substantial bodily harm, or commission of a crime
  2. To refer law enforcement personnel to professional services
  3. During Federal court or state criminal proceedings
  4. If involved law enforcement personnel expressly agree in writing to waive confidentially
  5. Any circumstances in which mandated reporting laws take precedence, including child abuse
- (b) Peer Support Team Members shall not make or maintain any notes of their communications. Statistics will be maintained on Team responses by the Peer Support Team Coordinator(s), but content and nature of conversation(s) will be specifically excluded.
- (c) A violation of confidentiality, except as mandated by law, is grounds for immediate removal from the Peer Support Team. The Team Coordinator, Team Manager, or the Team Mental Health Professional may recommend removal of any Team member to the Chief of Police, whose decision shall be final.

#### **1025.8 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)**

EAP services are available to all employees. Five (5) counseling visits per family per calendar year are offered including assistance for domestic violence issues, legal issues, financial concerns, marital or family problems, personal problems or job-related issues. Support is also available for managers and supervisors regarding employee performance concerns, advice on more effective methods of working with employees, responding to conflicts between employees, and other similar concerns. Participation in EAP is voluntary.

All counseling services are confidential and are offered by a network of professional therapists from throughout the Bay Area. Appointments are scheduled near the employee's home. All services can be accessed by calling Claremont Behavioral Services, 24 hours a day. Pre-

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authorization is not required. For more information, contact BART Employee Services or visit Claremont EAP online at [Claremonteap.com](http://Claremonteap.com).

Peer Support Personnel are trained in the EAP program service offerings. They can assist non-Peer Support supervisors in understanding their roles and responsibilities with identifying employee behaviors which would indicate the existence of employee concerns, problems and/or issues that could impact employee job performance and well-being. Peer Support Personnel may also encourage employees to seek voluntary EAP program services.

### **1025.9 CORDICOSHIELD RESPONSIBILITIES**

All department employees shall download the CordicoShield app to their department issued cellphones. The CordicoShield app may also be downloaded to an employee's personal cellphone, if desired. It is the responsibility of the Peer Support Team Coordinators to ensure the CordicoShield app's Peer Support Team profiles are up-to-date

### **1025.10 ANNUAL REVIEW**

An annual review of the program activities will be conducted including any recommendations for modification by the Peer Support Team Manager for review by the Chief of Police.