

The Value of Peer Support

Peer Support Teams are composed of first responders who have the desire and willingness to provide confidential assistance to their peers through an understanding of issues and similar experiences. The goal is to provide emotional support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help address potential difficulties. The value of Peer Support cannot be overstated.

Peer Support Teams play a vital role in breaking down the negative stigma surrounding mental health issues within the first responder community. Peer Support Teams offer a critical level of support by providing a safe, no-judgement platform for open communication.

In order for a Peer Support Team to be effective, its members must exude encouragement, hope, trust and confidentiality for those who seek their assistance. Communication between a peer support member and a fellow first responder is considered privileged and confidential with the exception of matters which violate the law.



MISSOURI FIRE FIGHTERS
CRITICAL ILLNESS POOL

Download the App!

The MFFCIP Responder Wellness App is free to members and designed to assist you with maintaining good physical and mental health.

- Instantly connect with peer support!
- Stay current on upcoming training & events
- Access health and wellness resources, reading recommendations, and useful links
- Your information is kept completely confidential. No personal information is stored or shared.

Use the appropriate QR code for your device to download the app.

iOS



Android



For more information and resources,
connect with us!

Scan the QR code below for the MFFCIP
website and follow us on Facebook



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CRITICAL ILLNESS POOL

Supporting First Responder Mental Health



A Guide for Peer Support Teams

Benefits of Peer Support Teams

- Enhanced job satisfaction and increased safety and health
- Decreased cost of recruiting and training by increasing retention of personnel
- A resource for employees and their families
- Diffusing behavioral health problems before becoming a crisis

Peer Support Teams may be requested following traumatic events such as:

- A line of duty death
- Critical injury of fellow member
- Suicide of member
- Death or severe injury of a child
- Mass-casualty event
- Act of terrorism

Appropriate Response:

- Active listening
- Stay focused, leave phone behind
- Discuss facts, not rumors
- Don't entertain blame pointing
- Don't assume your experience is the same.
- Follow-up! Check-in on peers.

Strong Peer Support Programs Have...

- *Full support of agency leaders*
- *Consistent and relevant training*
- *An emphasis on confidentiality and trust*
- *A defined process for seeking quality members*
- *Policies and procedures for team roles, duties, and responsibilities*
- *Availability for agency leadership use*
- *Inclusion of culturally competent mental health professionals*
- *Proactive, reactive, and post-incident resources*

Effective Peer Supporters

- *Possess professional credibility, respect and trust of their peers*
- *Ability to maintain confidentiality*
- *Ability to communicate effectively*
- *Possess a calm presence*
- *Show interest, understanding and genuine concern*
- *Possess the experience and knowledge about the types of incidents and situations to which members may be exposed*

It is highly encouraged that Peer Support Team members be nominated by their peers.

Peer Support Team Training is Vital

Peer support training is no different than other areas of emergency response training. Continuing education is essential, and resources must be kept current.

Topics may include:

- *Depression and Burn-out*
- *Stress Assessment*
- *Grief Management*
- *Resiliency*
- *Self-care*
- *Domestic Violence*
- *Crisis Management*
- *Confidentiality Issues*
- *Communication Facilitation*
- *Problem Solving Skills*
- *Suicide Assessment*
- *Alcohol and Substance Abuse*

Interested in Peer Support Team training?

Contact Sherry.MFFCIP@Gmail.com for training scheduled in your area.

Successful peer support programs should include trained behavioral health professionals. Peers should refer cases requiring professional intervention to a licensed behavioral health professional.