



## **GENERAL ORDER**

### **Peer Support Program**

#### **Purpose and Scope**

This order establishes the Sacramento County Probation Department's Peer Support Program and sets forth program structure, Peer Supporter selection and training process, confidentiality requirements, and the referral process.

#### **Affected Personnel**

All employees

#### **Effective Date**

February 13, 2017

#### **I. General**

The Peer Support Program is a voluntary and confidential program intended to provide support and referrals to employees in times of personal and professional difficulty.

The program is administered by a Peer Support Program Coordinator who, for purposes of the program, reports to the Management Liaison or his/her designee.

The Peer Support Advisory Committee shall select Peer Supporters with varied ethnic, cultural, gender and life experiences.

#### **II. Structure and Responsibilities**

##### **A. Management Liaison**

The Management Liaison provides administrative guidance as necessary to support the program.

##### **B. Peer Support Program Coordinator**

The Peer Support Program Coordinator chairs the Peer Support Advisory Committee and is responsible for the following:

1. Coordinating training, equipment, materials and personnel necessary for program operation.
2. Ensuring the Peer Support Advisory Committee implements the Peer Support Program in accordance with program training, policies, and objectives.
3. Coordinating between the Management Liaison, the Peer Support Advisory Committee, Peer Supporters, and outside resources and referrals.
4. Promoting awareness of the Peer Support Program within the Probation Department and through resources and referrals such as the

Sacramento County Probation Association (SCPA), the Law Enforcement Chaplaincy-Sacramento, and other peer support programs.

5. Ensuring the Monthly Peer Support Contact Summary is prepared and made available to the Peer Support Advisory Committee and the Management Liaison each month.
  - a. The Monthly Peer Support Contact Summary will document the number and type of peer contacts made each month.
  - b. The Summary will not include the names of the participants, or any details about the nature of the contacts.

C. Peer Support Advisory Committee

Comprised of five non-supervisory employees, a mental health professional trained in law enforcement personnel counseling, and a law enforcement chaplain. All positions on the Peer Advisory Committee are voluntary and members serve a two-year term. Committee responsibilities include:

1. Developing program rules, policies and training under the supervision of Peer Support Program Coordinator, with review by the Management Liaison or his/her designee;
2. Providing supervision and oversight to the Peer Support Program;
3. Assisting in the recruitment of Peer Supporters;
4. Selecting Peer Supporters as outlined in Section III of this order; and
5. Selecting new Advisory Committee members from the Peer Supporters.

D. Peer Supporters

1. Peer Supporters are employees who have been selected by the Peer Support Advisory Committee. Peer Supporters shall be released from regular duties as needed for the purpose of providing assistance to a participant while on duty. Employees acting within the scope of their responsibilities as a Peer Supporter while off duty are deemed agents of the Probation Department for purposes of workers' compensation coverage.
2. Peer Support members are trained to be effective listeners, provide feedback, clarify issues and assist the participant in identifying options for problem resolution by providing information on referrals. Peer Supporter members are *not* therapists. When problems appear to require specialized assistance, referral information will be made available to participants or their families.
3. Peer Supporter responsibilities include:
  - a. Providing peers seeking assistance with a verbal advisement relative to confidentiality;
  - b. Providing short-term supportive assistance and/or referral for employees involved in the Peer Support Program, within the scope of their ability, knowledge and training;
  - c. Making additional referrals for assistance when deemed appropriate;
  - d. Assisting as needed with funeral services for department employees;
  - e. Maintaining and submitting information on program activities and peer contact statistics to the Program Coordinator;

- f. Responding in a timely manner to verbal, telephonic or electronic communications from the Peer Support Advisory Committee or Program Coordinator;
  - g. Establishing contact with, and offering assistance to, participants;
  - h. Responding at any hour when contacted by the Program Coordinator;
  - i. Responding to the scene of a critical incident if requested by the Incident Commander, Watch Commander, or Peer Support Program Coordinator;
  - j. Attending all Peer Support training and meetings as required by the Peer Support Advisory Committee; and
  - k. Notifying the Program Coordinator or Management Liaison of any conflict of interest.
- 4. A Peer Supporter may withdraw from participation in the program, or be made temporarily inactive, by notifying the Program Coordinator or Management Liaison.
  - 5. A Peer Supporter may be placed involuntarily on inactive status by the Program Coordinator or Management Liaison.
  - 6. The Peer Support Advisory Committee may, by a simple majority vote, remove a Peer Supporter from the program under the following circumstances:
    - a. Failure to perform the duties, responsibilities and/or requirements outlined above; and/or
    - b. Failure to abide by the program policies and objectives.

### **III. Peer Supporter Selection Process**

- A. The Peer Support Advisory Committee shall select Peer Supporters through a simple majority vote using the following criteria:
  - 1. Applicant expresses a desire to participate as a Peer Supporter by submitting a letter of interest to the Peer Support Advisory Committee through the Peer Support Coordinator.
  - 2. Applicant demonstrates a willingness to:
    - a. Donate time without compensation when approached or requested to do so on off-duty time;
    - b. Attend required meetings and training sessions;
    - c. Maintain and forward statistics to the Peer Support Coordinator on a monthly basis;
    - d. Sign an understanding of confidentiality; and
    - e. Commit to a two-year term.
  - 3. Applicant must provide the Peer Support Advisory Committee with a letter from his/her immediate supervisor verifying he/she is not currently on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) or Controlled Leave.
- B. The Management Liaison or his/her designee will review all applications to ensure they meet the program's active status requirements.

#### **IV. Inactive Status**

- A. A Peer Supporter may request to be made temporarily inactive for any personal or professional reason the Peer Support Advisory Committee considers relevant.
- B. A Peer Support member may be placed on inactive status by the Management Liaison or Program Coordinator for reasons deemed relevant, including but not limited to:
  - 1. Medical leave;
  - 2. Military deployment; or
  - 3. Pending disciplinary action.
- C. The Management Liaison and Program Coordinator shall maintain confidentiality regarding an employee's inactive status.

#### **V. Participation**

Employee participation in the Peer Support Program is voluntary and must be initiated by the person(s) seeking assistance. There will be no mandatory referrals of employees to the Peer Support Program nor will Peer Supporters be ordered to initiate contact with employees. However, Peer Supporters and other Department employees may encourage individuals to participate in the Peer Support Program.

#### **VI. Confidentiality**

- A. Except as set forth in this order, the Program Coordinator, members of the Peer Support Advisory Committee, and the Peer Supporters shall maintain the confidentiality entrusted to them and not discuss any information disclosed during a Peer Support session.
  - 1. No privilege not otherwise recognized by law arises from the status of a Peer Supporter.
  - 2. Peer Supporters do not have complete confidentiality, such as in the attorney-client or physician-patient relationship.
  - 3. Unless the Peer Support member is directly involved in, or is a direct witness to, an incident that is subject to a disciplinary investigation, no information received by a Peer Supporter can or will be used in any disciplinary proceeding.
- B. The Peer Supporter shall advise each participant relative to the confidentiality of information exchanged in Peer Support sessions and that confidentiality will be strictly maintained, except under the following circumstances:
  - 1. Where information received by the Peer Supporter must be revealed by law, such as in cases of criminal conduct; e.g., spousal, child or elder abuse. In these cases, the Management Liaison shall be notified by the Peer Supporter as soon as possible.
  - 2. Where the Peer Supporter is a participant or direct witness in an administrative or criminal investigation. In these cases, the Peer Supporter shall immediately notify the Program Coordinator, who will find a replacement Peer Supporter.

3. Where there is reason to believe the participant intends to injure him/herself or another reasonably identified person. In the case of threatened serious injury to another person, a reasonable attempt shall be made to warn the intended victim, by immediately notifying the Management Liaison. In the case of threatened self-harm, the Peer Supporter shall notify a Law Enforcement Chaplaincy representative and the Program Coordinator immediately for assistance. The Program Coordinator shall contact the Management Liaison to apprise them of the situation and to seek further assistance as needed.
  4. Where due to alcohol or substance abuse, the participant is a danger to self, citizens or fellow employees. In these cases, the Peer Supporter shall notify a Law Enforcement Chaplaincy representative and the Program Coordinator immediately for assistance. The Program Coordinator shall contact the Management Liaison to apprise them of the situation and to seek further assistance as needed.
  5. Where the Peer Supporter is meeting with more than one participant at the same time. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings are an exception to this rule as they are performed in a group setting.
- C. Peer Supporters will not be ordered to give information to the Department concerning the content of Peer Support sessions except as listed in Section VI, paragraph B.
- D. Being a Peer Supporter does not give the right to withhold information listed in Section VI, paragraph B, of which the Peer Supporter has independent knowledge.
- E. Supervisory personnel who are Peer Supporters cannot abdicate their supervisory responsibilities when on duty and confronted by misconduct, disciplinary problems or other improper actions on the part of employees.
- F. Supervisors or Peer Supporters in a supervisory capacity are required to give an additional admonishment notifying the employee of their duty to report misconduct.

## **VII. Training**


All initial peer support training will be completed through a department-approved Peer Support course. Additional training will be provided at the direction of the Program Coordinator, and will include training in topics such as effective listening, critical incident stress, assessment skills, and post-traumatic stress. Training provided to Peer Supporters through the Peer Support Program will be documented by the Program Coordinator, included in Probation Department employee training records and may be applied toward the mandatory Standards & Training for Corrections (STC) hours if applicable.

**VIII. Referrals**

Referrals for services other than criminal defense or representation in disciplinary proceedings will be made to providers identified by the Peer Support Program Coordinator, Law Enforcement Chaplaincy, and Peer Support Advisory Committee.

**Amends/Replaces Previous Order**

Administrative Policy & Procedure, Peer Support Group  
Peer Support Group Guidelines

**Authorized By**  **Date** 1/4/2017  
*Lee Seale, Chief Probation Officer*