



Scarborough Fire Department

Scarborough, Maine



Standard Operating Procedures

Book:	Organization
Chapter:	Personnel, Policies & Procedures
Subject:	1380 – Peer Support Team & Critical Incident Response
Revision Date:	10/12/2018
Approved by:	<i>B. Michael Thurlow</i>

PURPOSE

To provide support and assistance to members of the Scarborough Fire Department who may be experiencing personal challenges or occupational stressors which could be adversely affecting their lives or their occupational effectiveness.

The Peer Support Team is a joint effort with the Scarborough Police Department that will provide employees of both departments with a program that will offer training and education as well as referrals to external mental health and support resources. Training will include effective stress management, post-traumatic stress recognition, and awareness education. Referrals to external resources may include support groups, mental health professionals, members of the faith based community, or other resources intended to support the employee through the challenges they are managing.

The Peer Support Team may also lead, support, facilitate or coordinate Critical Incident Stress Defusings/Debriefings.

POLICY

The Scarborough Fire Department recognizes the numerous pressures of the first responder profession on its personnel. The Department will endeavor to assist by providing a Member Assistance and Peer Support Program. The Peer Support Team will consist of personnel, as well as a licensed mental health clinician(s). The Department will encourage referrals to the team for support and assistance.

Members of the Scarborough Fire Department and their supervisors shall be encouraged to contact the Peer Support Team for assistance in dealing with both traumatic and regular occupational stress. Members may be referred to the Peer Support Team, department mental health clinicians, professional counselors, or other resources as determined by the Fire Chief.

It is the policy of the Peer Support Team that members shall not maintain written reports or records that identify members receiving assistance or specific details as to the nature of the contact. Communications made to a member of the Peer Support Team are to be handled professionally and in a discreet manner. Communications are considered confidential with the exception of those outlined below as required by statute (Maine Revised Statutes Annotated Title 25 Section 4202).

Members of the Peer Support Team are required to report matters which involve the following:

- A. The person indicates being a danger to self or others
- B. Disclosure of criminal activity
- C. Disclosure is requested, in writing, by the employee seeking assistance

The Peer Support Team shall inform the employee, prior to any discussion, what the limitations and expectations are regarding the information revealed. The Peer Support Team will meet with employees individually, or as a team, in a space that is discreet, free from interference, and ensures confidentiality.

PROCEDURE

A. Peer Support Team

a. Team Membership - Fire Department

- i. The Peer Support Team shall consist of four-six (4-6) career employees and one-two (1-2) per-diem or call employees.
- ii. One member shall be designated by the Fire Chief as the Team Leader who shall work with the Team Leader from the Police Department, and be accountable to the Chiefs for the operation of the Public Safety Peer Support Team.
- iii. All team members shall be nominated by employees of the department. The Fire Chief will review nominations and approve the selection of team members.
- iv. When considering recommendations, the Chief will consider candidates' interpersonal skills, team assignment (shift), employee character, and expressed interest and desire to serve on the team.
- v. Any assignment to the Peer Support Team shall be voluntary and will be in addition to a member's regularly assigned duties.
- vi. The Peer Support Team Leader, with input and support from department administration, shall identify appropriate training for members of the Peer Support Team.

b. Requests for Voluntary Assistance

- i. Requests for assistance may be made at any time by contacting a member of the Peer Support Team.
- ii. Referrals to the Peer Support Team may be made by a supervisor at any level of command.
- iii. Supervisors, at their discretion, may refer employees to the Peer Support Team or appropriate resources.

B. Critical Incident Response

a. Notification of the Peer Support Team Leader, or designee, shall be made as soon as possible following the critical incidents outlined below:

- i. Line of duty death;
- ii. Serious line of duty injury;
- iii. Co-worker suicide;
- iv. Officer involved shooting;
- v. Death of a civilian as the result of departmental operations;

- vi. Death of a civilian after prolonged rescue;
 - vii. Disaster or incidents resulting in mass casualties;
 - viii. Serious injury or death of a child;
 - ix. Significant events where the victims are relatives or friends of members;
 - x. Events or incidents that had the potential to inflict serious harm or death to employee(s);
 - xi. Any other incident or event that had the potential to inflict significant stress or emotional harm to the employee.
- b. In the event of any of the incidents outlined above, employees will be required to participate in an appropriate intervention as determined by the Peer Support Team Leader, Chief of the Department or their designee. The level of intervention may vary depending on the incident and needs of the participant, and will be determined by the aforementioned party or parties.

C. Mandatory Referrals

- a. Mandatory referrals can only be made by the Fire Chief after receiving all pertinent information from the member's supervisor(s) and Peer Support Team Leader.
- b. Members involved in any of the Critical Incidents outlined in section B, above, may be considered for mandatory referrals and be directed to a Department Clinician at the discretion of the Fire Chief.
- c. This does not prevent a supervisor from relieving a member from duty. In this event the Fire Chief must be notified immediately.
- d. In the event of a mandatory referral, only the Fire Chief may authorize administrative leave.
- e. The Department retains the right to choose the appropriate professional for the member to see.
- f. Expenses for these referrals will be borne by the Department.
- g. If a mandatory referral is made, the Department has the right to receive a fitness for duty report from a non-affiliated provider before the member returns to duty.