

MARIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE GENERAL ORDER MANUAL

CHAPTER - PERSONNEL
GO-02-08
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DATE
March 29, 2019

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

POLICY

The Sheriff's Office will provide all employees and their families with the opportunity for peer support and assistance in times of personal or professional problems. Peer Support is a confidential and voluntary process whereby a person discusses a personal issue with a non-professional; usually a friend or co-worker.

Peer Support staff members are trained to be effective listeners, to provide feedback, to clarify issues and to assist the counselee in identifying options for problem resolution. Peer Support personnel are not therapists. When a problem appears to require specialized assistance, information on referral resources will be made available to department members and their families.

PROCEDURE

The Peer Support Program functions and is administered as an independent unit. Peer Support personnel will consist of persons who represent a cross-section of the Sheriff's Office. This team will include a lieutenant and sergeants who provide oversight and guidance to team members and team functions.

Utilization of the Peer Support Program is voluntary and is usually initiated by the person seeking counseling. There will be no mandatory referrals of department members to Peer Support personnel.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS A MORAL/ ETHICAL ISSUE. In order for the program to succeed, confidentiality must be as complete as humanly and legally possible. Peer Support personnel shall maintain the confidentiality entrusted to him/her and not discuss any information developed in any Peer Support contacts. If Peer Support personnel determine that a situation requires specialized assistance, they shall obtain the counselee's approval to discuss the situation with a professional referral or other resource. Again, confidentiality shall be maintained by all Peer Support personnel.

Peer Support personnel shall advise the counselee that confidentiality is to be strictly maintained except in the following circumstances:

- When the information received by the Peer Support person must be revealed by law, such as cases of child abuse or felony criminal conduct.
- Where there is reason to believe that the counselee intends to seriously injure himself/herself or another person. In the case of threatened serious bodily injury, a reasonable attempt shall be made to warn the intended victim(s.) (Tarasoff Notification, Civil Code Section 43.92.)

Client standing is a LEGAL issue. No person without a professional license has a right to claim client standing in a court of law.

- Situations such as police shootings, excessive force law suits and even civil law suits present requirement for Peer Support personnel to advise the counselee that the contents of the conversations could be subject to subpoena.

It may occur that a Peer Support person is counseling an individual who becomes the subject of a disciplinary investigation. The Peer Support person should be guided by the confidentiality policy of the Peer Support Program. Peer Support personnel may not hamper or impede the actual investigation nor may they attempt to shelter the individual from the department.

The role of Peer Support personnel in any situation will be one of support in dealing with the problems faced by the counselee in the disciplinary process. If at any time the Peer Support team member finds it necessary to invoke the confidentiality provisions of the Peer Support Program, he/she should consult the Peer Support Team Sergeants or Lieutenant for guidance and assistance.

Peer Support personnel may participate as witnesses before boards and hearings as any department employee would. They are free to testify on behalf of another employee and with the permission of the employee, provide information which would normally be considered confidential. When asked or subpoenaed by the department or other board or body to provide testimony, Peer Support personnel shall appear and testify. They should be free to respond to questions asked about their knowledge of the individual but must not violate the confidentiality of that relationship except as required by law and department policy.

Supervisors who are Peer Support persons cannot abdicate their supervisory responsibilities.

AFFECTED DIVISIONS

All

DATE OF REVISIONS

April 28, 1995

June 6, 2002

By Order of:

ROBERT T. DOYLE
SHERIFF/ CORONER