

**MARIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
GENERAL ORDER MANUAL**

**CHAPTER - PERSONNEL  
GO-02-08  
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**DATE  
April 28, 1995  
Rev. 06/10/02**

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**PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

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**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**

Organization

The Peer Support Program functions and is administered as an independent unit.

The Peer Support Unit will be administered by a five (5) member Peer Support Steering Committee, which reports to the Sheriff through a staff officer appointed by the Sheriff or his representative.

The Peer Support Program shall have a coordinator who acts as a liaison between the appointed staff officer and the Peer Support personnel and Steering Committee members.

The Peer Support personnel shall consist of persons who represent a cross-section of the Sheriff's Office.

Participation in the Peer Support Program

Utilization of the Peer Support Program shall be voluntary and initiated by the person seeking counseling. There will be no mandatory referrals of Department members to Peer Support personnel nor will Peer Support personnel be directed to initiate contact with Department members.

In order for the program to succeed, confidentiality **must be as complete as humanly and legally possible.**

Peer Support Personnel Selection Criteria

- Submission of a memorandum requesting membership.
- Completion of the membership agreement form.
- Applicant qualifications, to include having a minimum of two years with the Marin County Sheriff's Office.

- Prospective applicants must be able to develop rapport and be problem solvers.
  - Active listening is the heart of Peer Support and applicants must have strong skills in this field.
  - Department needs (adequate assignment and watch representation, training, etc.)
  - Approval of the Sheriff or his representative.
- Priority for applications will be determined by individual qualifications and department needs.

Requirements for Active Status - Continued active status as a Peer Support person is dependent upon participation and compliance with the following:

- Attend update training.
- Complete monthly statistical sheets. (See Attachment)
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Adhere to the policies and procedures of the Peer Support Program
- Observe the Peer Support Program guidelines as stated herein

#### Peer Support Personnel - Rejection and Removal Criteria

Candidate Rejection Status - If a candidate fails to fulfill the selection criteria, the request for membership shall be denied.

Removal from Active Status - If a Peer Support person fails to adhere to requirements of the Peer Support Program as listed above, he/she shall lose active status. The member shall re-apply for active status by submitting an interoffice memorandum.

#### Statistical Summary Sheet

In order to properly evaluate the Peer Support Program and its effectiveness, monthly statistical sheets shall be completed by all Peer Support personnel.

The completed statistical sheet and shall be forward to the Peer Support Program Coordinator.

Completion of the form is mandatory for maintaining active status.

There shall be NO documentation of any kind that identifies a person seeking peer support, i.e., no recording of names and no recording of notes.

#### Training

- P.O.S.T. Certified basic course (24 hours), initially.
- A 16-hour yearly approved update.

#### Confidentiality

The Peer Support personnel shall maintain the confidentiality entrusted to him/her and not discuss any information developed in any Peer Support contacts.

**CONFIDENTIALITY IS A MORAL/ETHICAL ISSUE.** 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, the 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

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.

#### Internal Investigations

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 person finds it necessary to invoke the confidentiality provisions of the Peer Support Program, he/she should consult the Peer Support Program 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.

#### Duties of Supervisory Officers

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

Supervisors may refer subordinates to the Peer Support Program or an outside referral.

#### **RELATED STANDARDS**

#### **AFFECTED DIVISIONS**

All

#### **DATE OF REVISIONS**

04-29-02  
06-10-02

#### **By Order of:**

CHARLES T. PRANDI  
SHERIFF