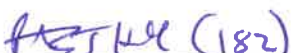


COLCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT

		SUBJECT: Peer Support Team	
EFFECTIVE DATE: March 6, 2025		NUMBER: G.O. # 47	
REFERENCE:		Replaces: General Order #47 dated March 7, 2017	
REEVALUATION DATE: As Needed	APPROVED: 	NO. PAGES: 5	

PURPOSE:

The Colchester Police Department recognizes the sacrifice and commitment of its employees, who in the course of their duties expose themselves to danger, violence, and the worst in human behavior. The Colchester Police Department's most valuable resource is its employees. A successful approach for employees to deal with professional and/or personal life stressors is to use a program which offers a non-professional (peer) support team. Additionally, employees will have access to the current professional services offered by the Department Clinician(s) and the Town's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Colchester Police Department to assist officers and civilian employees in dealing with this stress and trauma, therefore, the Colchester Police Department has created a Peer Support Team (PST). The PST helps employees who experience emotional, psychological and physical strain associated with professional and personal life stressors. The PST offers the support of trained peer counselors to assist employees with day-to-day stress and trauma and provides timely intervention and prevention strategies for those in need. The PST is composed of a group of peers who have volunteered and been approved by the Chief of Police to make themselves available to any member of the department to talk out personal and/or professional problems confidentially, with someone who understands their job and cares about their well-being.

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I. DEFINITION:

The PST is a program that offers assistance and appropriate support resources to employees when personal or professional problems negatively affect their work performance, family, or self. This assistance is confidential, providing it does not violate any law or department policies.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Services of the PST include (but are not limited to):
 - i. An initial assessment of the employee's needs;
 - ii. Peer support intervention;
 - iii. Critical incident debriefings;
 - iv. Referral to an appropriate resource for service;
 - v. Stress management techniques;
 - vi. Provide information on community resources and partners who have expertise in dealing with the stress inherent in law enforcement and with other health related issues.
- B. A PST member is authorized to use department facilities to meet with employee(s).
- C. A PST member is permitted to consult with employee(s) on duty. No names, written reports, or identifying information is given to any Department representative during these contacts or specific details as to the nature of the contact.
- D. Communications made to a member of the PST are to be handled professionally and in a discreet manner, but they are not legally considered to be privileged or confidential communications. Only the licensed Department Clinician(s) has/have confidentiality.
- E. Members of the PST shall coordinate with employee(s) seeking assistance to provide a meeting location that is free from interference and will maximize the goal of anonymity.
- F. PST members shall maintain contact with the Department Clinician(s) regarding program activities.
- G. The PST Supervisor along with the Department Clinician(s) shall identify appropriate training for employees of the PST.
- H. PST members will be expected to attend in-service training, training webinars, assigned educational components (books, articles, mailing lists and/or appropriate conferences).

III. PST SELECTION PROCESS

- A. The PST shall consist of at least 3 sworn and/or civilian employees. One member shall be designated by the Chief of Police, or designee, as the Team Supervisor and shall be accountable to the Chief for the operation of the PST.
- B. Other employees shall be assigned to the PST by the Chief of Police with the advice of the Team Supervisor.
- C. Any assignment to the PST shall be voluntary and will be in addition to an employee's regularly assigned duties. PST members may voluntarily withdraw from participation at any time, but they are required to notify the Team Supervisor.
- D. A PST member will be removed from participation in the program for conduct inconsistent with program policy, objectives and duties.
- E. Negative job performance caused by PST duties must be reported to the Team Supervisor so that issues can be addressed and resolved.
- F. Participation in the program is voluntary, and no overtime or compensatory time will be authorized for time expended performing PST duties unless authorized by the Chief of Police or designee.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY

- A. The acceptance and success of the Colchester Police Department's PST will be determined, in part, by observance of the protected confidential information shared with peer members. It is imperative that each PST member maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual within the guidelines of this program. Communication between PST members and employees are considered confidential except for matters which involve the following:
 - i. Danger to self;
 - ii. Danger to others;
 - iii. Duty to warn;
 - iv. Suspected child abuse;
 - v. Narcotic offenses (sales or transportation);
 - vi. Domestic violence;
 - vii. Factual elderly abuse;
 - viii. Possession and/or under the influence of illegal narcotics;
 - ix. Criminal activity;
 - x. Acts of misconduct as outlined by Colchester Police Department Rules and Regulations;
 - xi. Disclosure is requested by the employee being served.

- B. PST members should inform the employee, prior to discussion, what the limitations and exceptions are regarding the information revealed. In those cases where a concern or a question regarding confidentiality arises, the PST member must immediately contact the Department Clinician(s) who will take appropriate action, as needed.
- C. A PST member is not exempt from federal, state or local laws or the Rules and Regulations of the Colchester Police Department.

V. CASES INVOLVING INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

- A. It may occur that a PST member is assisting an employee who is, or becomes, the subject of a disciplinary investigation. The PST member should be guided by confidentiality as noted above in section IV.
- B. PST members should offer appropriate support and assist individuals through the stress they may face during the disciplinary process. If PST members have any questions or concerns regarding these situations, they should refer the employee to the Department Clinician(s) for additional resources.

VI. PST NOTIFICATION OR REFERRAL

- A. The Colchester Police Department encourages all supervisors to contact the PST for assistance in dealing with traumatic stress.
- B. Requests for assistance may be made at any time by contacting a member of the PST or the Department Clinician(s).
- C. Referrals to the PST may be made by a supervisor at any level of command.
- D. All employees may be referred to the PST, Department Clinician(s), or professional counselor as determined by the Chief of Police.
- E. Notification of the PST Supervisor (or designee) shall be made **as soon as possible** following these types of events:
 - i. Line of duty death;
 - ii. Serious line of duty injury;
 - iii. Employee suicide;
 - iv. Officer involved shooting;
 - v. Disaster or incidents with mass casualties;
 - vi. Tragic events/deaths to children;
 - vii. Significant events where the victims are relatives or friends of employees;
 - viii. Events that seriously threaten the lives of employees;

- ix. Any event that has significant emotional power to overwhelm the employee.

F. The following incidents require **mandatory** intervention by the PST Supervisor and/or PST member:

- i. Line of duty death;
- ii. Serious line of duty injury;
- iii. Death of a civilian due to Department operations;
- iv. Suicide of a co-worker;
- v. Officer involved shooting;
- vi. Disaster or incident of mass casualty;
- vii. Death of a victim after prolonged rescue measures;
- viii. Serious injury or death of a child;
- ix. Any high-risk event where life/lives of employee(s) was threatened;
- x. Any other incident which provokes significant stress response in the employee(s) involved.