

*Woodburn Fire District
Operational Guideline 2003
Behavioral Health & Wellness Support*

Adopted: 12/4/2019

SCOPE

- A. This guideline serves as a comprehensive reference to inform District members of the resources supported by the Fire District for the management of behavioral health and wellness including stress as a result of traumatic events. These resources include:
 - 1. Peer Support Program / Critical Incident Stress Management
 - 2. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - 3. Chaplain Services
 - 4. International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Center of Excellence
- B. Attachment #1 of this guideline contains current contact information for all behavioral health & wellness resources supported by the District.

I. GENERAL

- A. The Woodburn Fire District is committed to supporting high quality programs to assist members in maintaining optimum behavioral health and wellness. Members are encouraged to utilize the available resources and hold the District accountable for the maintenance of the resources as a top priority.
- B. Critical incident stress management (CISM) is a process designed to reduce stress and enhance recovery from a traumatic event based upon principles of crisis intervention and education. A traumatic event is any situation that causes strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with an emergency worker's ability to function on-scene or negatively impact their job performance and personal life.
- C. The very nature of the firefighter occupation exposes members to traumatic events that they may or may not be able to work through satisfactorily on their own. Factors that cause stress to one individual may be nonstressful for another. Research has shown that only a very small percentage of emergency workers are not affected by traumatic events. Approximately one-half of those who demonstrate symptoms related to traumatic events can resolve these alone; the other half continue to be affected.

- D. Response to traumatic events may be immediate and incident specific, or may be cumulative, building up over a long period of time and including many incidents. Exposure to traumatic events can lead to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a serious mental condition that, when left untreated, can have a significant negative impact on the health and wellness of emergency responders. The Woodburn Fire District is committed to providing education to recognize events that can lead to PTSD and provide specific procedures proven to maintain the mental health and wellness of emergency responders.

III. PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM & CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

A. General

1. The peer support program is a voluntary and confidential behavioral health and wellness resource for all WFD employees and their family members.
2. The concept of peer support builds on the well-established tradition of firefighter helping firefighter. Because of the unique demands of the job, many firefighters prefer to talk to someone who comes to the conversation with an understanding of what being a firefighter is like. Peer support team members are trained to be effective listeners, provide feedback, clarify issues, and assist co-workers in identifying options for problem solving. When appropriate, the peer supporter will assist the member with referrals to mental health professionals or other outside resources.
3. Peer support team volunteers are WFD personnel that have been trained to provide assistance to co-workers experiencing problems ranging from work-related issues to personal problems like divorce, financial strain, parenting or elder-care concerns, serious illness, or death.
 - a. If desired, other agency teams or members may be used for peer support assistance.
4. The peer support program includes on-scene support for CISM following a traumatic event.

B. Responsibilities

1. The Woodburn Fire District is responsible for the funding and promotion of the peer support program. WFD contracts with Responder Life for the management of the peer support program and the coordination of a regional CISM team to perform debriefings and defusings when needed following a traumatic event.
 - a. Peer support team members will be compensated for all time spent performing peer support responsibilities and annual training requirements.
2. All members, counselors, and participants of the peer support program are responsible for maintaining integrity, honesty, empathy, respect and confidentiality as the core principles of the peer support program.

C. Areas of Peer Support

The peer support team has been trained to offer the following support:

1. Individual support: Provide one-on-one emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis to others who express a need for assistance. Peer support team members are available to:
 - a. Offer support after family tragedies.
 - b. Provide assistance during and after personal and professional conflict.
 - c. Check on the status of injured or sick District members and provide support where desired and needed.
 - d. Refer peers to appropriate resources when necessary.
 - e. Assure confidentiality, within guidelines, to members who seek assistance.
2. On-Scene Support: Used only at significant events, the peer team member's role is to observe and advise the incident commander of any signs of acute stress reactions in the personnel immediately involved. Peer team members offer encouragement, support and education, provide for basic needs of members, and implement stress management strategies as needed.
3. Defusing: Rapid, brief, informal interventions immediately following a disturbing event. Defusings are used to provide facts, minimize rumors and reduce the emotional "sting" of the event. A defusing

session is conducted by a trained peer team member, a trained chaplain or a mental health professional trained in CISM. A defusing ordinarily lasts less than an hour and prepares the worker to remain at work and/or return home with a reduced emotional burden.

4. Debriefing: A confidentially structured group meeting with a mental health professional in attendance. Debriefings are conducted by a trained peer team member, Responder Life peer support liaison, trained chaplain or a designated mental health professional. Debriefings are usually held within 48-72 hours after the incident and are restricted to only the people exposed to the incident. A debriefing is primarily educational for the purpose of providing information regarding critical incident stress and potential stress related symptoms and methods to manage these symptoms.
 - a. The conversations and actions of any peer support team led interactions will not interfere with any administrative or criminal investigation. It is not the purpose of peer support to discuss anything that would jeopardize an investigation, cause an employee discipline, or cause an employee to admit deliberate violations of the policies or procedures of the Woodburn Fire District.
 - b. Uninvolved peer team members, working with an involved peer, should attend to support the peer and assist in looking for signs of acute stress among other attending members.
 - c. If a peer support team member is involved in the incident, they should not conduct the debriefing.
 - d. Personnel should be aware that even if they choose to say nothing during a debriefing, their attendance may help a fellow employee. Attending the debriefing is mandatory but participation is voluntary.
5. Follow-up Debriefing: Conducted weeks or months after the incident. Peer support team member(s) will follow up with those individuals involved to determine if there are any delayed or prolonged stress symptoms that should be addressed.

D. Peer Support Activations

1. Prior to having a peer support conversation, the peer support team member will inform participant(s) of limitations and exceptions regarding the information revealed. The acceptance and overall success of the peer support team will be determined, in part, by the observance of confidentiality of all information learned from an individual within the guidelines of ORS 181A.835.
2. Stress is a response to an event, not the actual event itself. What could be considered a crisis for one person may not be for another. Individual factors, such as personality, pre-existing conditions, coping skills, and support systems all play a role in an individual's reaction to stress.
3. Individual stressors are different for everyone but might include:
 - a. Death of family or friends
 - b. Relationships (family, co-workers, friends, children)
 - c. Addiction
 - d. Anxiety
 - e. Grief
 - f. Financial
 - g. Legal
4. Work related triggers could include:
 - a. Serious injury or death of a District member in-the-line of-duty.
 - b. Death or serious injury of police officer when District personnel are involved.
 - c. Loss of life of a patient following extraordinary and prolonged expenditure of physical and emotional energy during rescue efforts.
 - d. Serious injury or death of a civilian resulting from District operations. This could include injury or death of a civilian as a result of a collision with an emergency vehicle.
 - e. Traumatic death or violent injury of a child.
 - f. SIDS response
 - g. An incident that is charged with profound emotion, i.e., firefighter placed in danger or threats of physical harm.
 - h. Incidents that attract extremely unusual or critical news media coverage.
 - i. Mass casualty incidents
 - j. Suicide of a co-worker

k. Victims known to emergency personnel

E. Access Procedures – Peer Support Program

1. Peer support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The current peer support members and Responder Life contacts are listed in Attachment #1 of this policy. Peer support team members are also posted on the District bulletin boards and listed on the District website.
2. Members may choose to contact a peer support team member on their own and/or make direct arrangements for private counseling through the employee assistance program (EAP).
3. On-Scene Support:
 - a. Only those peer support team members with the additional CISM training should be utilized in the on-scene counseling of incident commanders and affected personnel in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event. Incident commanders can contact the peer support team coordinator or the Responder Life peer support liaison at the numbers listed in Attachment #1.
 - b. Arrangements for defusings and debriefings should be made by contacting the Responder Life staff members listed in Attachment #1. A peer support team member with CISM training can assist with the Responder Life coordination for defusings and debriefings.

F. Confidentiality

1. ORS 181A.835 protects communication with a peer support team member as privileged and not subject to disclosure in a judicial or administrative proceeding if:
 - a. The communication occurs during a peer support counseling session (meaning both parties are aware that the peer supporter is acting in his/her capacity as a peer supporter), and;

- b. The communication is with a person who has been designated and trained as a peer support member (must be on the current peer support team list).
 - c. Communications and oral or written information may not be disclosed by peer support members or participants in any judicial, administrative, arbitration, or other adjudicatory proceeding or during discovery involved in the proceeding.
 - d. Notes, records, or reports arising out of a peer support session are not considered public record; therefore, are not subject to disclosure under Oregon public records law.
 2. The peer support confidentiality law does not apply to:
 - a. Any threat of suicide or homicide made by a participant in a peer support counseling session, or any information conveyed in a peer support counseling session relating to a threat of suicide or homicide;
 - b. Any information relating to abuse of children or of the elderly. Or other information that is required to be reported by law; or
 - c. Any admission of criminal conduct.
 - d. Information disclosed to those individuals regarding abuse must be reported to the police or Oregon's Department of Human Services.
 - e. Peer team members who witness an event that may lead to an investigation shall not serve as peer support for those involved. They may refer the person to another peer support team member.
3. If a staff member who is the subject of an internal investigation requests peer support, ORS 181A.835 must be followed. In these cases where any questions arise concerning confidentiality, the peer support member should immediately contact the peer support team coordinator or Responder Life peer support liaison who will advise on the appropriate action to be taken.

4. Peer support sessions and discussions among a peer team member and an individual should take place at a location that will provide privacy of the conversation.
5. A peer team member may discuss group or individual sessions or cases with other peer team members or the peer support team coordinator for the purposes of consultation, but they may not discuss the communications outside of the program.
6. District members will be advised of the confidential nature of discussions and the exceptions to the confidentiality rule prior to any defusing, formal group work or peer support meeting.

F. Records

1. Monthly documentation of peer support member interactions will be recorded. These records will be limited to type and length of interaction. No names or details will ever be used as this would violate the confidentiality of the peer support interaction.
2. Responder Life will maintain control of any and all written documentation of peer support interactions.
3. Responder Life will provide any paperwork and or processes for peer team members to follow.

G. Selection Process – Peer Support Team Members

1. Every year the peer support coordinator with Responder Life will conduct a review of peer support team members. This will be an opportunity for the health of the team to be reviewed as well as an opportunity for members to step down if desired and an opportunity for new members to be considered.
2. The selection process will occur through a survey to identify members whom personnel would consider to be a good peer support member. If the individual expresses interest in becoming involved, they will be interviewed by the peer team coordinator and Responder Life. When the selected members have been identified, training will be provided.

3. A peer team member may take a leave of absence from the peer support team whenever needed. The leave of absence will be coordinated by the peer support coordinator.

H. Training Requirements

1. The peer support coordinator will coordinate all peer support training with Responder Life. The emphasis of training will focus on skill development for conducting peer assistance.
 - a. Initial training for peer support team members will be conducted by Responder Life. The training meets the industry standard for emergency service and public safety personnel in accordance with ORS 181A.835.
 - b. CISM training will be provided to a select number of peer team members.
 - c. Ongoing education will be offered through classes and quarterly meetings. Attending regular meetings will help peer support members maintain their skills and gain new skills and knowledge.
 - i. Each team member must attend at least two of the four Responder Life trainings per calendar year.
2. Training on the accessing and use of peer support will be offered to all employees and volunteers of Woodburn Fire annually by the peer support coordinator or designee. Training format will be provided by Responder Life.

I. Peer Team Composition & Functions

1. Peer Support Team Coordinator (District Member)
 - a. Supervises team members
 - b. Involved with the interview and selection process
 - c. Coordinates training and resources for team members with Responder Life peer support liaison.
 - d. Manages expenses and personnel costs associated with the operations of the team.
 - e. Coordinates annual review process with Responder Life peer support liaison.

2. Responder Life Peer Support Liaison (Responder Life Member)
 - a. Ensure all employees are aware of the program.
 - b. Involved in prospective team member interviews and selection
 - c. Identify and coordinate training and resources.
 - d. Develop resources to assist the peer support team when problems are identified.
 - e. Liaison for peer support referrals.
 - f. Developing and maintaining referral lists for staff for various behavioral issues.
 - g. Maintain monthly statistical data of reported contacts with peer support members for program evaluation purposes.
 - h. Provide assistance to the peer support team coordinator with problems or questions regarding the peer support program.
 - i. Back up the peer support coordinator to ensure a peer support team response to all critical incidents.
 - j. Back up the peer support team coordinator to ensure post incident care occurs (defusing's, debriefing, etc.).
 - k. Maintaining certification of team members.
 - l. Will follow ORS 181A.835.

4. Team Members
 - a. Must be a member of Woodburn Fire.
 - b. Has volunteered for the position of peer support team member and been through the interview process and designated training.
 - c. Will follow ORS 181A.835.

IV. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

A. General

1. The employee assistance program (EAP) is an important component of behavioral health and wellness maintenance. This service offers up to six in-person counselling sessions per year provided by mental health professionals that specialize in fire and EMS issues.

2. This service is confidential and available free of charge to all District members and their immediate family. All counselors have masters or Ph.D level of training.
3. The Woodburn Fire District contracts with Public Safety EAP through the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) for professional mental health counselors.
4. Public Safety EAP provides a wide array of work/life services and benefits. For a full understanding of all the services provided, members should visit the organization website at PublicSafetyEAP.com

B. EAP Access

1. All members can immediately access the EAP service 24 hours a day using the contacts listed in Attachment #1.
2. The District will maintain EAP informational brochures and/or posters on the station bulletin board.
3. Peer support team members and company officers can provide additional assistance in accessing and utilizing the EAP services.

V. CHAPLAIN PROGRAM

A. General

1. The Woodburn Fire District supports a chaplain program that supplements and locally adapts operations and procedures issued through the Federation of Fire Chaplains.
2. The Fire District chaplains are members of the clergy that have received specialized training in the CISM issues associated with the fire service.
3. Fire District chaplains report directly to the fire chief or designee.
4. When requested, Fire District chaplains are authorized to provide emotional, relational, and spiritual support for District members and their families with any work related or personal issues.

5. Notwithstanding mandatory reporting requirements (as outlined in II.F.2 above), the information that members share with a chaplain is considered lawfully privileged and shall remain confidential as defined in ORS 40.260.
6. In addition to assisting District members, Fire District chaplains can also be consulted or activated when members of the public request assistance in the aftermath of a traumatic event.
7. Chaplains are available to assist the District and family members in the planning of funerals and memorial services for District members and their immediate families.
8. Chaplain member and community support will be provided without proselytizing for the chaplain's own affiliation. Regardless of affiliation, the chaplain(s) acknowledges that, in their role as chaplain, they operate as non-denominational and non-sectarian.

B. Chaplain Program Contacts

1. The fire District chaplains can be contacted 24 hours a day at the numbers listed in attachment #1 of this guideline.
2. Peer support team members can provide additional assistance in accessing and utilizing the chaplain service.

C. Chaplain Program Connections

1. Fire District chaplains are authorized to take advantage of every opportunity to socialize and otherwise connect with the firefighters and emergency personnel. Such opportunities may include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. *Training.* The chaplain should attend training classes and field activities to the extent possible.
 - b. *Meetings.* The chaplain's attendance during meetings may afford opportunities for ministry, as well as "face time" with District members.
 - c. *Drop-bys.* The chaplain should drop by the station from time to time just to get to know the firefighters and emergency personnel. Flexibility is a must for these drop-bys, and the

chaplain must ensure that his/her presence does not interfere with the operations of the District.

- d. *Special events.* The chaplain's attendance at banquets, award nights, retirements, parties, and other events will offer opportunities to interact with the firefighters in a more social setting. The chaplain may be able to offer an invocation or special prayer, be a special speaker, or just attend.
- e. *Routine calls/Ride-alongs.* If possible, it is beneficial for the chaplain to respond on routine calls from time to time to enable them to become familiar with protocols and procedures.

D. Incident Scene Chaplain Activation and Operations

1. If it is determined that the chaplain is needed at an emergency incident scene, they shall be contacted by dispatch via cell phone. The chaplain is required to ensure that the dispatcher is provided with their current contact information.
2. Upon arrival at the scene, the chaplain will immediately report to the incident commander for a situation briefing.
3. At all times while on-scene, the chaplain will wear identifying clothing and will work within the incident command system.

E. Death Notifications, Funerals and Memorial Services

1. The chaplain should be contacted immediately whenever the death of a fire department member is imminent or confirmed.
2. The chaplain may accompany a District member to notify next of kin of the death of a member.
3. The chaplain will make themselves available for help in the planning and execution of funerals and memorial services for firefighters, active or retired, as well as other emergency personnel.
4. If asked to assist in planning funerals and memorial services for firefighters, chaplains will be allowed access to the employee emergency contact information forms.

5. Elements included in funerals and memorial services will follow the suggested options from the Federation of Fire Chaplains unless otherwise directed. The family and the fire chief will make the final determination.

VI INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIREFIGHTERS (IAFF) RESOURCES

A. General

1. The IAFF Center of Excellence is available to assist all professional firefighters with behavioral health and wellness issues. This service is free of charge to all members of the IAFF.
2. The Woodburn Fire District fully supports the career member use of this resource.
3. This confidential treatment specializes in the comprehensive treatment of substance abuse, PTSD and other co-occurring behavioral health issues.
4. The treatment and recovery programs features a staff of mental health professionals specifically trained and highly experienced in fire service related issues. The 60 bed treatment facility is located on 15 acres just outside of Washington DC.

B. Program Access

1. Members of the IAFF can access this program 24 hours a day by calling: **844-893-5735**
2. IAFF members can visit the following website for further information and program access: <https://www.iaffrecoverycenter.com/>
3. Peer support team members can provide additional assistance in accessing and utilizing this resource.