



Alexandria Police Department

Directive 4.5



RESILIENCY AND PEER SUPPORT

Effective Date: 07-28-2020		Cancels: CISM 03-03-2009
Updated Date:	Section(s):	SME Review Date:
Updated Date:	Section(s):	2024
Updated Date:	Section(s):	

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4.5.01 PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the use of the Resiliency and Peer Support Team (RPST) available at the Alexandria Police Department, establish procedures for employee counseling and crisis intervention through the City’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP), discuss the types of psychological services available to employees from initial hire to retirement, and to establish guidelines for temporary relief of duty and psychological fitness for duty.

4.5.02 POLICY

- A. Maintaining a stable and well-adjusted work force is in the best interest of the Department and the community. It is the policy of the Alexandria Police Department to:
 1. To use psychological pre-employment screening to assist in hiring the best qualified police applicant;
 2. To assist Department employees who experience stress induced or other emotional problems;

3. To support and encourage employees in securing quality, confidential assistance, making use of any of the services available when they feel it could benefit them personally and/or professionally;
 4. To ensure that any post-incident effects on job performance are identified and alleviated. Employees experiencing post-incident stress may initiate contact with a Peer Support Team member or EAP at any time; and
 5. To evaluate employees with performance problems who may benefit from psychological services.
- B. When an employee has firsthand knowledge (personally observed behavior) that another employee is suffering from psychological problems to the extent that the employee represents a danger to himself/herself or others, he or she has a duty to report this information. The information will be reported to the affected employee's immediate supervisor, another available supervisor in the chain-of-command, or directly to the Chief of Police as soon as possible.
- C. In cases involving a shooting or serious violent injury to a police employee, the employee must participate in a debriefing with a mental health professional before returning to duty.

4.5.03 AUTHORITY/BACKGROUND

In recognition of the need for support to emergency workers, the Virginia Division of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has established and maintained a process for crisis intervention and peer support services for emergency medical services personnel and public safety personnel, including statewide availability and accreditation of critical incident stress management (CISM) teams or peer support teams and personnel. The Peer Support Team will be headed by a Virginia-licensed clinical psychologist, Virginia-licensed psychiatrist, Virginia-licensed clinical social worker, or Virginia-licensed professional counselor, who has at least five years of experience as a mental health consultant working directly with emergency medical services personnel or public safety personnel. (Code of Virginia §32.1-111.3, subdivision A.13.)

The Alexandria's Police Department's participation in peer support services is led by the Resiliency and Peer Support Team Coordinators, designated by the Chief of Police, and is carried out by trained resiliency and peer support team members. A mental health clinician, who heads the team, is available for consultation and leads team debriefings.

4.5.04 DEFINITIONS

Department Member - For purposes of this Directive only, when referring to participants of the Resiliency and Peer Support Team, the term "Department Members"

shall also include Police Department volunteers. APD volunteers provide support to Alexandria Police Department employees, are often affected by the same stressful incidents, and share the same support system.

Resiliency and Peer Support Team (RPST) - The Resiliency and Peer Support Team (RPST) consists of a group of trained Department members who provides anonymous and confidential peer support to fellow employees who may be experiencing psychological discomfort as a result of their involvement in a critical incident and/or any personal or job-related event outside the realm of their coping mechanism.

Critical Incident - For the purposes of this directive, "critical incident" means an incident that induces an abnormally high level of negative emotions in response to a perceived loss of control. Such an incident is most often related to a threat to the well-being of the emergency medical services or public safety employee or to the well-being of another individual for whom such employee has some obligation of personal or professional concern. (Code of Virginia §19.2-271.4D.)

Debriefing – Confidential discussion of experiences and after-effects related to critical incidents; intended to provide support and an outlet for views and feelings associated with a stressful incident. Debriefing is not counseling.

Group Debriefing – Confidential discussion among police employees and/or other emergency services employees involved in the same incident, Peer Support Team member, and a mental health professional.

4.5.05 CONFIDENTIALITY

Code of Virginia § 19.2-271.4 outlines Privileged Communications by Certain Public Safety Personnel as the following:

A person who is a member of a Resiliency and Peer Support Team (RPST), established pursuant to subdivision A 13 of § 32.1-111.3, shall not disclose nor be compelled to testify regarding any information communicated to him by emergency medical services or public safety personnel who are the subjects of peer support services regarding a critical incident. Such information shall also be exempt from the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Code of Virginia § 2.2-3700 et seq.).

- A. A person whose communications are privileged under subsection A may waive the privilege.
- B. The provisions of this section shall not apply when:
 1. Criminal activity is revealed;
 2. A member of a RPST is a witness or a party to a critical incident that prompted the peer support services;

3. A member of a RPST reveals the content of privileged information to prevent a crime against any other person or a threat to public safety;
4. The privileged information reveals intent to defraud or deceive the investigation into the critical incident;
5. A member of a RPST reveals the content of privileged information to the employer of the emergency medical services or public safety personnel regarding criminal acts committed or information that would indicate that the emergency medical services or public safety personnel pose a threat to themselves or others; or
6. A member of a RPST is not acting in the role of a member at the time of the communication.

To encourage the appropriate use of psychological services, the Department and its employees will make every effort allowed by law to protect the confidentiality of all employees regarding their use of psychological services.

4.5.06 TYPES OF SERVICES

A. PRE-EMPLOYMENT SCREENING:

1. The Department will use psychological pre-employment screening to help screen for the best possible police applicants.
2. Prior to appointment to probationary status, sworn police applicants will undergo a psychological evaluation by a certified professional licensed in the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide such service.
3. The evaluation will be conducted, scored, and evaluated by the contracted psychologist.
4. Records of the results of emotional stability and psychological fitness screenings are forwarded to the Human Resources and Training Division. The Human Resources and Training Division maintains these items in a secure location in accordance with the Library of Virginia.

B. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP): [22.2.6.a-f; 35.1.9.f]

1. The EAP is a professional counseling service contracted and paid by the City of Alexandria to help its employees with personal problems. City employees and their immediate family members may use the services of EAP.
 - a. All personnel will receive training in the EAP services, their role, responsibility, and identification of employee behaviors which would indicate

the existence of employee concerns, problems, and/or issues that could impact job performance.

- b. After recognition that a problem exists, use of EAP services should be recommended as early as possible to reduce or eliminate the problem before it results in deterioration of health, family life and/or job performance. Employees may contact EAP voluntarily or a supervisor may refer them.

2. EAP CONFIDENTIALITY

- a. If an employee voluntarily seeks EAP help, the Department will not be notified.
- b. If referred by a supervisor, the Department will be advised only that the employee contacted the EAP.

3. COST

- a. There is no cost for EAP services.
- b. If an employee is referred to services outside of EAP, there may be a cost. The employee's health insurance may cover all or part of this cost.

4. APPOINTMENTS

- a. Employees may make an appointment by calling the EAP at (800) 346-0110.
- b. Employees may see a counselor during their lunch hour or before or after work. However, if the appointment is made during working hours, the employee must use sick, annual, compensatory leave or leave without pay for the absence and have supervisor approval.
- c. The employee is not obligated to discuss the nature of the appointment. Confidentiality and employee rights to privacy will be honored.

C. RESILIENCY AND PEER SUPPORT TEAM (RPST)

1. Police employees may experience psychological discomfort and problems as a result of their involvement in a critical incident as defined in this directive or any event on or off the job that is outside the realm of their coping mechanisms that can result in significant emotional and/or physical reactions.
2. Peer Support Team members assist employees in coping with both personal and job-related effects of what they have experienced by providing anonymous and confidential peer support, helping employees clarify their concerns, and exploring available resources. The emphasis throughout the program is to prevent, recognize and alleviate stress before it affects the health, safety, personal lives, and job performance of the employee.

3. The Department's participation in peer support services is led by the Peer Support Team Coordinator, designated by the Chief of Police.
4. As part of the Peer Support Team, employees may be encouraged to seek assistance through the Employee Assistance Program or other resources.
5. A list of all the RPST members and their contact numbers will be made available to all Department personnel.
6. RPST members shall recognize they are not mental health providers and will operate within the limits of their training. They shall encourage employees to seek professional assistance when appropriate.
7. Peer support will be available at all times. An employee may access/utilize the peer support by simply contacting any of the RPST members or by calling 703-746-1991.
8. There will be no written communication between the team member and a person making a referral. All referrals will be made verbally, in-person or via telephone conversation. No voice mail message will be left.
9. The RPST team member shall not interfere in any on-going criminal or internal investigation and will avoid direct involvement in the incident.
10. An employee may be referred if another person (supervisor, spouse, partner, etc.) requests the RPST to discretely contact the employee and the employee voluntarily enrolls at that time.
11. Regardless of rank, the team member exercises no command authority when performing team duties.
12. RPST members must be acting in the role of a RPST member at the time of the communication for it to be considered privileged communication. The RPST member shall immediately notify the RPST leadership and affected party's chain of command of any information outlined in section 4.5.05.B (1-6).
13. Except where noted in section 4.5.05.B (1-6):
 - a. All conversations and sessions conducted by RPST members are **strictly confidential**. However, information may be shared between team members to garner assistance and experience from one another. These discussions shall be general in nature, shall not include names or other unnecessary identifiers, and shall not be discussed outside of closed team sessions.
 - b. The RPST member shall not disclose nor be compelled to testify regarding any information communicated to him or her by an employee who is the recipient of peer support services.

- c. No RPST member should be ordered to divulge confidential information to the Office of External Affairs and Professional Responsibilities or to anyone within or outside the Police Department.
- d. Failure to maintain confidentiality shall result in the RPST member being removed from the team and possible disciplinary action. All RPST members will sign a confidentiality agreement.

14. Critical Incident Stress Management: A function of the Resiliency and Peer Support Team

- a. The supervisor of any police employee involved in a significant stressful incident will notify a RPST member within 24 hours of the incident, giving information about the incident and which employees were involved.
- b. Supervisors should remain alert to possible after-effects of an employee's involvement in a stressful incident, or any catastrophic event in the employee's life, which could potentially affect his/her work performance, and notify a RPST member.
- c. The RPST member notified will quickly contact the employee(s) involved in the incident. Following the initial contact, the team member will consult with the RPST Leadership to determine what type of debriefing, if any, is appropriate.
- d. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefing procedures will be activated when critical incidents as defined in section 4.5.04 occur, to include the following:
 - i. Shootings;
 - ii. Serious injury to police employee;
 - iii. Death or serious injury to children;
 - iv. Violent death; and
 - v. Mass casualties.
- e. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefing procedures will also be activated for Hostage/Barricade incidents, and other incidents as determined by a supervisor, commander, or the Peer Support Team Leadership.
- f. RPST members will follow-up with the supervisor and/or employee involved 30 days after a critical incident to ensure that any prolonged or delayed difficulties are addressed with appropriate debriefing or referral. When additional follow-up is needed, RPST members will take the necessary steps to plan and schedule the follow-up.
- g. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is not part of any formal Employee Assistance Program (EAP) referral or any administrative action

taken by the Department. While CISM may be requested in conjunction with the EAP, it is not a replacement.

- h. Peer Support Team members shall not take notes or otherwise document the session.
- i. Peer Support Team members shall not disclose nor be compelled to testify regarding any information communicated to him or her by an employee who is the recipient of Peer Support Team services.

15. Resiliency and Peer Support Team Leadership:

- a. The Resiliency and Peer Support Team will have a core leadership group consisting of six members. The members will consist of the administrative coordinator, operational coordinator, Human Resources Commander, Training representative, and the mental health representative. They will share the below responsibilities:
 - b. Responsible for monitoring the performance of the RPST members to ensure they meet standards of training, performance and behavior.
 - c. Responsible for ensuring the Human Resources and Training Commander and the affected employee's chain of command is made aware of any:
 - i. Information that would indicate the employee receiving peer support services poses a threat to themselves or others;
 - ii. Information regarding criminal acts committed by the employee; and
 - iii. Other information concerning the employee's activities or well-being that the Department should be kept abreast of in the best interest of the employee and the Department.
 - d. Responsible for the administration and logistical need of the team to include maintaining the team roster, schedule, timely notification of scheduled meetings and training, and providing general administrative oversight functions.
 - e. Will coordinate team training and activities within the Department.
 - f. Consult with the Human Resources and Training Division Commander to institute a selection process.
 - g. Submit an annual report to the Chief of Police by February 1st of each year consisting of the following:
 - i. Number of RPST members;
 - ii. Number of critical incident call-outs;
 - iii. Number of RPST contact;
 - iv. Number of wellness trainings provided by the RPST; and
 - v. Any monetary expenditure to include overtime, training, and equipment.

16. Resiliency and Peer Support Team Training:

- a. All training shall be provided by recognized professional organizations and individuals working in the peer support field and/ or CISM field.
- b. Peer Support Team meetings and trainings shall be conducted at least quarterly.

4.5.07 TEMPORARY RELIEF OF DUTY

- A. A division commander, the commander of the Office of External Affairs and Professional Responsibilities, or a higher authority may temporarily relieve an employee of duty when it reasonably appears that such action is in the best interest of the employee and the Department. Such relief of duty may occur when an authority determines in his or her judgment that the employee is under a physical or mental condition which might render the employee incapable of adequately performing duties.
- B. Pursuant to City Administrative Regulation 6-18, where unusual circumstances preclude an employee from fully or satisfactorily fulfilling the duties of his/her position, the Chief of Police, with the approval of the City Human Resources Director, may place an employee on administrative leave for periods of time not to exceed 90 calendar days on any single occasion.
- C. An officer who is temporarily relieved of duty and placed on administrative leave does not automatically have his or her police powers suspended. If the officer's police powers are not suspended, the officer will retain their Department issued police credentials, badge, issued/assigned weapon(s), extra magazines, radio, MDB, access cards, and take-home vehicle (if assigned).
- D. If it is determined that the administrative leave will exceed 90 calendar days and/or the employee is unable to satisfactorily perform the essential functions of his or her duties and responsibilities due to an apparent mental or physical condition, the Chief of Police may submit a written request to the Human Resources and Training Division Commander for a fitness-for-duty examination.
- E. Any employee whose action(s) or use of force in an official capacity results in death or serious physical injury, will be removed from line-duty assignment pending an administrative review. The purpose of this action is to relieve the employee of the burdensome responsibility of effectively discharging his/her duties under the stressful conditions which accompany such a serious incident. **[4.2.3]**

4.5.08 PSYCHOLOGICAL FITNESS FOR DUTY**A. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

1. Employees are encouraged to seek professional consultation to alleviate problems caused by stress, emotions, relationships, or substance abuse where psychological services may be of assistance.
2. The Department will not initiate an investigation or complaint based on an employee's request for professional assistance. However, such voluntary participation shall not preclude prosecution or disciplinary action, which may result from a related investigation or complaint.
3. When an employee who is voluntarily under the care of a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist is deemed unfit for regular duty, for any length of time, it is the employee's responsibility to notify his/her chain of command as soon as this determination has been made.
4. The fact that an employee is voluntarily involved in psychological services does not preclude the Department from mandating that the employee participates in other psychological services.
5. The fact that an employee has voluntarily requested psychological services, by itself, will not be recorded or used by the Department for any purposes.
6. A supervisor may suggest to a subordinate that he/she participate in psychological services. If the subordinate does participate, it is still considered a voluntary referral.
7. For voluntary participation in psychological services, the patient is considered the client of record and is entitled to confidentiality. Any concerned records can only be released when the client authorizes it in writing, or by court order. The only exception is if the patient is a "danger to himself or others." In that case, the doctor has the responsibility to advise appropriate parties.

B. MANDATORY PARTICIPATION:

1. There will be times when it is in the best interest of the Department and the employee that the employee be directed to participate in psychological services.
2. The order for mandatory participation must come from the Chief of Police, and the involved employee will follow the order as with any other order. The involved employee will cooperate with all requirements of the mandated psychological services including, but not limited to:
 - a. Keeping all appointments,
 - b. Being cooperative during all counseling sessions, and
 - c. Submitting to all required examinations.

3. In a fitness for duty evaluation, the Department is considered the “client of record,” however, no documents will be released to anyone without the approval of the Chief of Police. All records of participation shall be confidential.
4. Management referrals for a subordinate may be recommended by a supervisor to the Chief of Police and may be based on:
 - a. Observed deteriorating job performance;
 - b. Unusual behavior;
 - c. Employee behavior which requires psychological determination of fitness for duty; or
 - d. Any behavior or incident not associated with disciplinary proceedings.

C. DISABILITY AND TREATMENT:

1. If an employee is determined to be unfit for duty, continued employment will depend on the results of the psychological evaluation combined with the medical opinions as to the success of subsequent treatment.
2. Treatment will depend on a variety of factors but will be provided based on current health insurance and worker’s compensation agreements.
3. Any employee who disagrees with the actions in his/her particular case may follow the prescribed grievance and appeal procedure contained in Department directives and City Administrative Rules and Regulations 6-21, Grievance Procedures.

D. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:

1. When an employee contacts the psychologist on his or her own for counseling, the employee is responsible for all fees not covered by his/her insurance plan. All appointments will be arranged during the employee’s off-duty time.
2. When the Department directs an employee to the psychologist, the Department shall assume all fees not covered by insurance. When possible, appointments shall be arranged during scheduled duty hours.

By Authority Of:

**Michael L. Brown
Chief of Police**