



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT



Standard Operating Procedures – 2.12 Peer Support Team and Mental Health

PEER SUPPORT TEAM AND MENTAL HEALTH

Effective: August 2, 2024
Scheduled Review: August 2, 2027
Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide for the parameters of a peer support team (PST), the relationship of the PST between the City of Ann Arbor and IAFF 693, and to provide guidance on supporting the mental health of members.

II. PEER SUPPORT TEAM

It is also known as “critical incident stress management team” or “CISM team.” A group of trained members, under the direction of a clinical director, who provide psychological and emotional support for department members and their immediate families in times of professional or personal need. The PST is not intended to be a replacement for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or professional counseling services. The PST may provide referrals for professional counseling services.

The purpose of the PST is to increase organizational resilience to the adverse effects of post-traumatic stress by providing education, emotional support and assistance. The program will support members emotionally and psychologically through the use of one-on-one discussions, pre-incident education including stress management, on scene support, and post incident support to include responder families when necessary. The PST will be comprised of IAFF members who have been specially trained in peer support and crisis intervention techniques. Team members will work closely with the clinical director to ensure continuity of care for all personnel. The intent of the PST is listed below:

1. Provide a program comprised of trusted peers that will support personnel in finding a resolution to situations affecting their personal and professional environments.
2. Encourage and promote the physical, emotional, and social health of all members.
3. Provide information, educational materials, and resources pertaining to the various aspects of peer support.
4. Act as a liaison between the member and the department to identify and assist with resources available to members.
5. Implement and support annual training to develop peer support team members and to increase organizational resilience.
6. Work closely with regional peer support teams to promote dissemination of resources and establish working relationships with other public safety peer support teams.
7. Provide annual “awareness” training to company officers to assist with identification of situations that require intervention.

IAFF 693 has established an accredited “Type 3” PST. This team is registered with the Michigan Crisis Response Association (MCRA) and has a clinical director.



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT



Standard Operating Procedures – 2.12 Peer Support Team and Mental Health

PST sessions will remain confidential as required by MCL 333.20981...333.20983 PART 209A Critical Incident Stress Management Services. However, members should be aware that some information obtained may not be confidential and will need to be reported to the proper agency. Such circumstances may include:

- The PST member reasonably needs to make an appropriate referral of the emergency service provider to or consult about the emergency service provider with another member of the PST or an appropriate professional associated with the PST.
- The communication conveys information that the emergency service provider is or appears to be an imminent threat to himself or herself, a PST member, or any other individual.
- The communication conveys information relating to child or elder abuse.
- The emergency service provider or the legal representative of the emergency service provider expressly agrees that the emergency service provider's communication is not confidential.

III. TEAM MEMBERSHIP

PST members are not trained mental health professionals and therefore will not diagnose or treat mental health conditions. Peer support is not a substitution for professional counseling but a mechanism for referral when further assistance is needed. Peer support activities and contacts are voluntary. All employees may choose to participate or decline peer support.

Clinical Director – The clinical director will be selected and paid for by IAFF 693. There is no contractual relationship between the clinical director and the City of Ann Arbor. The clinical director will manage the psychological and clinical aspects of the program. The clinical director will be a licensed mental health care professional. The functions of the clinical director are to:

1. Provide consultation and advice on all clinical aspects of the program.
2. Provide clinical support and guidance to the team leader.
3. Assist in the procurement and delivery of continuing education for the peer support team.
4. Assist in the development of program policies and procedures.
5. Act as the liaison between the peer support team and other members of the mental health professional's community.

Team Chair(s) - These positions will be designated by IAFF 693. The functions of the team leaders are to:

1. Manage assigned PST members.
2. Assist in deploying and implementing peer support activities.
3. Maintain records of team activities.
4. Facilitate new member recruitment.
5. Assist in disseminating educational material and developing team training.
6. Act as the point of contact for outside agency requests.
7. Continue to provide peer support while performing the additional team leader duties.

Team Member - These positions will be designated by IAFF 693. PST members are the primary resources and providers for members seeking assistance from the peer support program. Peer support team member functions are to:



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT



Standard Operating Procedures – 2.12 Peer Support Team and Mental Health

1. Provide crisis intervention and basic support for members and their families.
2. Triage and consult the clinical director in a crisis event to make recommendations and determine the crisis interventions needed.
3. Participate in educating members about peer support and psychological support services.
4. Deploy and implement peer support techniques and strategies.

All PST members will have the following courses:

- Frontline Strong Together Group and Individual (GRIN) CISM Response
- IAFF Peer Support Training
- Front Strong or IAFF Suicide Prevention and Intervention Training

IV. REQUESTING SUPPORT

Members may request PST support by contacting any PST member. PST representation may also be requested by any fire officer or command staff to facilitate company defusing or to respond directly to the incident for high acuity calls that may impact a large number of personnel on scene. A fire officer or command staff may request PST outreach to a specific individual(s). However, the officer should have no expectation of knowing whether that action did or did not occur. PST interactions must always be voluntary. Support may be suggested for members but may never be ordered or forced by a superior.

V. ON-DUTY RESET

At the discretion of the on-duty battalion chief, an assistant chief, or the fire chief, an on-duty crew may be kept on-duty but immediately removed from responding on incidents for a one-hour reset period for the following events:

- Traumatic events involving children.
- Mass casualty incident.
- Significant incidents involving members or their families.
- Unusual events that have a powerful impact.

Anytime a reset period is initiated, there will be notification of the PST. The assistant chief assigned to operations and fire chief shall also be notified when a reset period is initiated. The reset period may be extended, including up to the remainder of the shift, with approval from either the assistant chief assigned to operations or fire chief.

VI. RESOURCES

Touchstone Healing Center – Selected psychotherapy practice by IAFF 693 and serves as clinical director of PST.
(734) 325-8685

Frontline Strong Together – Endorsed by IAFF, Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union
(833)347-8766

Ulliance - City of Ann Arbor, Employee Assistance Program
(800)448-8326