

## REDMOND FIRE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

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### **PERSONNEL – 039**

DATE: JUNE 1, 2018  
REVISED: MARCH 8, 2019

### **PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM**

FIRE CHIEF: TOMMY F. SMITH

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**Purpose:** To establish and maintain a volunteer Peer Support Program (PSP) for both personal and job related support, including Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), provide procedures for activating Peer Support Team (PST), and provide information for Redmond Fire Department (RFD) personnel regarding how and when to access the PST. To develop a culture where seeking emotional support is encouraged and resiliency is valued.

**Originator:** The Deputy Chief of Operations shall be responsible for the content, revision, and annual review of this instruction.

**Policy:** Redmond Fire Department strives to provide 24-hour access to trained volunteer Peer Support Team Members (PSTM) for all personnel experiencing a personal or professional crisis. This includes CISM services that consist of debriefings, diffusings, and individual support for department personnel. These services may also be rendered to the community when necessary.

- Fire department supervisors and the Peer Support Leadership Team will consider the need for peer support activation after any critical incident for department members and/or the community.
- Fire department personnel are encouraged to seek assistance from members of the PST, CISM-trained Chaplains, the Peer Support Mental Health Professional (MHP), and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) even while on duty for a personal or professional issue.
- Peer Support Team Members (PSTM) are available to all RFD personnel 24 hours a day.

### **Definitions:**

**Leadership Team** – The Leadership Team shall consist of three PSTM, preferably representing each shift, who shall be selected, based on the application process, by the Medical Services Administrator (MSA), who oversees the Health and Wellness Task Group. The Peer Support Team shall operate under the auspices of the Health and Wellness Task Group. The Leadership Team will be responsible to manage the program and personnel, including but not limited to:

- Providing program development
- Define team call out protocol
- Developing a training schedule and assisting in the program's educational component
- Maintain a database of all PST activities
- Assist in connecting RFD personnel with PSTMs
- Maintain an updated list of the Fire Department PSTMs on "O" drive. O:\PeerSupport\Unsecured Files
- Maintaining the Peer Support designation of "(PS)" on Telestaff reports so that on duty crews can readily identify on duty PSTMs
- Meet with the Fire Chief or the Deputy Chief at least once per year to give report on the PST activities, education, and utilization

Department Chaplains – PST Chaplain(s) must complete initial Individual and Team CISM training and be available to RFD personnel.

Program Mental Health Professional (MHP) – Serves as an on-call advisor to the RFD Peer Support Leadership Team and its members. The Program MHP is responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

- Oversee PSTM training
- Peer Support consultation referral
- Serve as a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) facilitator or recommend a MHP trained substitute
- Conducting limited counseling and referral for traumatic stress recovery for RFD members

PST Members – Firefighter or staff employees who agree to volunteer and who have completed an initial PST training class that encompasses both the Individual and Team CISM training components and is accredited by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF). Team members must be appointed by the Fire Chief to be a PSTM. The PSTMs are responsible for:

- **CONFIDENTIALITY:** Peer Counselors RCW 5.60.060(6)

(6)(a) A peer support group counselor shall not, without consent of the law enforcement officer or firefighter making the communication, be compelled to testify about any communication made to the counselor by the officer or firefighter while receiving counseling. The counselor must be designated as such by the Sheriff, Police Chief, Fire Chief, or Chief of the Washington State Patrol, prior to the incident that results in counseling. The privilege only applies when the communication was made to the counselor while acting in his or her capacity as a peer support group counselor. The privilege does not apply if the counselor was an initial responding officer or firefighter, a witness, or a party to the incident, which prompted the delivery of peer support group counseling services to the law enforcement officer or firefighter.

(6)(b) For purposes of this section, "peer support group counselor" means a:

- (i) law enforcement officer, firefighter, civilian employee of a law enforcement agency, or civilian employee of a fire department, who has received training to provide emotional and moral support and counseling to an officer or firefighter who needs those services as a result of an incident in which the officer or firefighter was involved while acting in his or her official capacity; or
- (ii) non-employee counselor who has been designated by the Sheriff, Police Chief, Fire Chief, or Chief of the Washington State Patrol to provide emotional and moral support and counseling to an officer or firefighter who needs those services as a result of an incident in which the officer or firefighter was involved while acting in his or her official capacity.

**If strict confidentiality is not kept by a Peer Support Team Member, he/she will be removed from the team immediately.**

- Being available to respond when needed
- Attending three (3) of the four (4) quarterly training meetings of the PST. Attending less than three (3) training meetings per year may result in dismissal from the team

- Declining to participate in a Peer Support role whenever they are already involved in the critical incident or their objectivity is otherwise compromised to a significant degree by circumstances of the critical incident or in their personal lives
- Listening, assessing, doing regular follow up whenever necessary, referring fire department members to the PS Chaplain, MHP, or EAP. PSTMs should never be used as a replacement for a trained and licensed professional
- Being trained to assist in CISM Defusings, Management Briefings, and Debriefings
- Remaining up-to-date with current PST standards and practices
- PSTM shall monthly provide the Leadership Team with the following information for the database, while carefully maintaining the confidentiality of the people involved:

Support Team Member Name

Date of support

Duration of support contact hours

Action/Follow up: None, Referral, Chaplain, MHP, EAP, Other

PST Database – A database maintained by the Leadership Team. It monitors only the dates and hours, not the client, in order to document the quantity and quality of care provided by the PST while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) – Should include the presence of the Program MHP, or his/her designated Clinician, CISM trained Chaplain and two PSTMs. NOTE: these CISD team members must not be impacted or involved in the critical incident.

Non-Incident Peer Support – RFD personnel are also encouraged to seek assistance from members of the PST, CISM-trained Chaplain, the EAP, or the Program MHP while on or off duty if a personal or professional issue is particularly troubling to them and may impact their work or personal life.

Maintenance of and Reporting Requirements of the PST – The Leadership Team, Chaplain, and the Program MHP will review the information in the database at least once a year. In January, they will forward a report to the Chief of the Department.

Activation of Peer Support Team – The on-duty Battalion Chief or Medical Services Officer may activate or alert the Peer Support Leadership Team for any incident or circumstance that they feel that Peer Support would be beneficial to department employees. Company officers may also contact PST at any time if needed. This may be accomplished either by direct communication in person or by phone, as well as activation of the “Peer Support Leadership Team” in Active911. Upon consultation with a Peer Support Leader, the Leader shall be responsible to alert and deploy PSTM's, according to their best judgement, to support department members by taking into consideration the time of day, incident dynamics, logistics, and other considerations.

Peer Support Team Application Process

1. PSTMs must be nominated from within the Department during a 21-day nomination period. No self-referrals will be accepted.
2. Each nomination will be reviewed by the Leadership Team and verify that they meet the following requirements:
  - a. Have a minimum of 3 years of fire department experience.
  - b. Be off of probation
  - c. Be in good standing (not currently under discipline or actively engaged in a work-plan)
3. The nominees who meet the requirements will then be invited to apply for the PST.
4. A nominee who chooses to apply will:
  - a. Complete an application questionnaire
  - b. Request a recommendation from their immediate supervisor
  - c. Request a recommendation from a peer
  - d. Sign a letter of confidentiality
5. Once the application paperwork is turned in and reviewed, an interview will be set up with the Leadership Team.
6. The Leadership Team will make the final decision on which applicants will be invited to join the team.
7. Prior to engaging in any individual or team Peer Support activities, the member must complete Individual and Team CISM training offered by the department.
8. The Leadership Team will present membership recommendations to the Chief of the Department for approval.
9. Team membership will be reviewed every 2 years.