

Australian Capital Territory

Corrections Management (Peer Support) Policy 2009

Notifiable instrument NI2009-146

made under the

***Corrections Management Act 2007*, section 14(1) (Corrections policies and operating procedures)**

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Corrections Management (Peer Support) Policy 2009*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after it is notified.

3 Policy

I make the

PEER SUPPORT POLICY

attached to this instrument, to facilitate the effective and efficient management of correctional services.

James Ryan
Executive Director
ACT Corrective Services
25 March 2009



Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC)



PEER SUPPORT POLICY

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Purpose

To outline the peer support policy.

Authority

Legislation

Corrections Management Act 2007, section 14.

Policy

Principles

Peer support is voluntary assistance provided by specially trained staff to colleagues who are involved in a Critical Incident in the work place. The Peer Support Program is not a counselling service.

Peer support is an early intervention and referral service, aimed at keeping the employee in the workplace and in a productive frame of mind, while assisting the employee to cope with the events that are impacting on their daily lives.

Confidentiality and Conflict Limitations

All information shared with a peer support team member is confidential, whether it involves work related problems such as critical incidents and their subsequent interventions (e.g. defusing, debriefing), personal issues or non work-related problems.

It is a mandatory requirement for peer supporters to maintain confidentiality. Where confidentiality breaches are identified peer supporters may have their role reviewed and/or relinquished.

Investigations

Where the peer supporter is requested to provide support for a staff member undergoing an investigation, peer supporters should be guided by the *Peer Support Policy*. They should neither hamper nor impede the investigation and should not shelter the staff member from appropriate investigatory processes and procedures.

Where the peer supporter is requested to provide support for a staff member undergoing a disciplinary action, the peer must refrain from taking any adversarial action and must remain impartial in relation to the process.

Roles and Responsibilities

Peer Supporters

Peer Supporters must:

- monitor staff members and assess the need for support/or counselling services;
- provide appropriate support or referral as outlined in the Employee assistance Program (EAP) guidelines as required;
- disseminate information in regard to the Peer Support and the EAP programs;
- maintain knowledge of CISM to enable both proactive and reactive support of staff members as appropriate;
- maintain knowledge of defusing, debriefing and one to one crisis intervention protocols to enable efficient and effective provision of peer support;
- complete mandatory follow up of all CISM and crisis interventions;
- maintain knowledge of community resources, agencies, and mechanisms to gain access to them;
- be accountable for upgrading relevant peer support skills through ongoing training and supervision; and
- abide by the *Peer Support Policy* and the Code of Ethics.

NB: Prior to consulting with the EAP, or as an option otherwise, employees should be given the opportunity to discuss the matter with the ACTCS Principal Psychologist.

Peer Support Team Leader

The Peer Support Team Leader must:

- Provide a confidential, reliable and credible support service for staff, their families and significant others, under the guidelines of the *Peer Support Policy*;
- Liaise with Management as necessary, for the provision of appropriate training and service requirements;

- Co-ordinate and/or provide peer support for defusing and debriefings;
- Co-ordinate mandatory follow up of peer support clients where the situation dictates;
- Arrange regular (at minimum bi monthly) meetings of the Peer Support Team; and
- Arrange for regular training sessions for the maintenance and upgrading of skills and community resource knowledge.

De-selection Procedures

A Peer Support Team Member may be de-selected for a breach of the Code of Ethics or *Peer Support Policy*.

Prior to any de-selection procedure taking place, a panel of three peer support officers will be convened on a case by case basis to investigate any allegations. The panels recommendations will be given to the Co-ordinator who will then review the information and make a decision based on the information on hand.

Appeals

Appeals must be lodged within seven days of receiving the decision from the co-ordinator. Appeals will go in the first instance to the EAP provider or if unwilling or unavailable, to the Superintendent.

Selection Protocol and Procedures

A call for nominations will be disseminated to all staff. Staff who are nominated will be approached in regard to accepting the nomination.

Staff may self nominate.

Staff may not accept nomination.

Permanent and Temporary Withdrawal from the Team

Where a peer support team member requires time away from active peer duties they may request a leave of absence from the Team Leader. This absence will be granted for a period of up to twelve months and should be reviewed prior to resuming their role.

A peer support team member may resign at any time by giving notice in writing to the Team Leader.

Code of Ethics

A Peer Support Team Member will maintain confidentiality of information unless it jeopardises the well-being or safety of an individual(s) or there is an overriding legal obligation to do so.

Peer Support Team Members will respond to requests of support from their colleagues and other persons as appropriate without discrimination.

The position of Peer Support Team Member will not be used to foster any type of material, emotional or psychological gain.

Peer Support Team Members will at all times to the best of their ability, show respect for and protect the welfare of those staff with whom they have a responsibility to.

Peer Support Team Members will operate within their levels of competence and must not misrepresent their qualifications, training or experience.

Peer Support Team Members will accept responsibility for the development of knowledge and skills to enhance the performance of their role.

Peer Support Team Members will act in a professional manner at all times.

Peer Support Team Members agree to abide by their responsibilities as outlined in the Peer Support Policy.

Critical Incident Stress Management

Critical Incident Stress Management is an organised approach to the reduction and control of harmful effects of stress that arise from a person being exposed to events or situations that are outside the normal scope of that persons life experiences. It involves rapid intervention, immediately following an incident, that is considered to be outside the normal experience of the person who is exposed to the incident.

Supervisors shall release staff to attend Peer Support duties as reasonable, upon request.

Aims of Stress Debriefing

Debriefings are seen primarily as a preventative measure. They are both proactive and reactive. The value is in minimising the likelihood of individuals experiencing negative reactions by providing knowledge to assist in understanding and managing the issue. There are three objectives in conducting a stress debriefing:

1. To reinforce the fact that those involved are normal people experiencing understandable reactions to highly stressful events or situations.
2. To encourage free expression of thoughts, fears and concerns in a supportive group environment without losing status among peers.
3. To allow individuals to gain insight and to possibly reframe the event where appropriate perspective.

Terms of Reference and Functions

The Peer Support Team shall be available to:

1. Provide non-judgemental support to staff in need during times of emotional crisis.
2. Identify situations that may require referral to the Department's contacted Employee Assistance Provider.
3. Recommend that a staff member contact the Employee Assistance Provider.
4. Provide information to staff on further assistance that may be available from other agencies and how this can be accessed.
5. To carry out Stress Defusing with staff following a highly stressful event.
6. To serve on Critical Incident Stress Debriefing teams facilitated by the Employee Assistance Provider.

Constraints on Operation of the Peer Support Team

The members of the team shall confine their activities to the following guidelines:

1. Work as a Peer Support Team member is voluntary. Members are supported by the Department's OH&S policy.
2. Team members are generally available as required.
3. To the greatest extent possible, duties are shared amongst Team Members.
4. Team Members are not to act as advocates.
5. If a conflict of interest arises, the employee will be advised of the policy and referred to either the Employee Assistance Provider or other appropriate service provider.

Record Keeping

Peer Support Team members shall observe the following guidelines in relation to their activities:

1. Only statistical numbers will be kept.
2. Statistics will be sent to the Co-ordinator.

Procedures

Confidentiality and Conflict Limitations.

In serious circumstances where the peer supporter has reason to believe that there is a threat to the well-being and safety of the client or another person, due to either disclosure or abnormal behaviour by the client, the peer supporter must share these concerns with an appropriate mental health professional.

If this situation arises the following procedure is to be followed:

- 1 Inform your client of your concerns.
- 2 Refer them to the EAP.
- 3 Assist them to contact the EAP.
- 4 Share your concerns with the EAP in the first instance.
- 5 Seek the advice of an appropriate mental health staff member if the EAP is not available.

Where the peer supporter would become complicit in a criminal act, they must recognise that there is no legal protection for confidentiality under these circumstances. The Peer Supporter shall:

- 1 Inform the client of the issue and advise them that this matter cannot be kept confidential.
- 2 In the first instance contact the police and inform them of the situation.
- 3 If charges are laid under section 9 of the PSMA or other relevant Acts, you are required to inform the Superintendent of the charges being laid. You are not required to go into detail.

Contacting Peer Support

As a general guide line, a peer support officer can be contacted by anyone at anytime. There are no limits to the number of support officers you can communicate with. The Peer Supporter should:

- 1 Become aware that someone may need assistance of some description. The Peer support officer may approach the person during initial discussion asking whether they have spoken to another peer support officer about the situation.

- 2 Continue the intervention if the person has not approached a peer support officer.
- 3 Determine if the person has been communicating to another peer support officer.
- 4 Inform the co-ordinator that they have contacted and whether a follow up has occurred.

A peer supporter should be contacted:

- 1 When a peer support officer asks the CO2 or CO3 to contact the co-ordinator.
- 2 When the CO2 or CO3 deem it advisable to contact the Co-ordinator.
- 3 Whenever there is a serious Self Harm.
- 4 Whenever there is a fight that involves serious injury to others.
- 5 Whenever there is a fight that involves injury to staff.
- 6 Whenever there is a serious assault / injury of an officer including, needle stick, urine or faeces coverage.

When contacted the Co-ordinator will discuss the matter with the CO2, CO3 or on site Peer Support officer to assess the required response and will dispatch Peer Support officers as required and will contact the EAP provider if deemed necessary.

Supervisors shall release staff to attend reasonable peer support duties upon request.

Supervisors may grant Peer Support officers the opportunity to take an officer to a quiet location or for a walk if requested which may include leaving the gaol interior and either walking the perimeter or going to the staff facilities building.

Forms/Templates

Nil

Related policies and procedures

Nil