

Australian Capital Territory

Corrections Management (Staff Peer Support) Policy 2020

Notifiable instrument NI2020-437

made under the

Corrections Management Act 2007, s14 (Corrections policies and operating procedures)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Corrections Management (Staff Peer Support) Policy 2020*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

3 Policy

I make this policy to facilitate the effective and efficient management of correctional services.

4 Revocation

This instrument revokes the *Corrections Management (Peer Support) Policy 2009* [NI 2009-146].



Jon Peach
Commissioner
ACT Corrective Services
17 July 2020

STAFF PEER SUPPORT

POLICY NO. A12

ACT CORRECTIVE SERVICES



ACT
Government

Justice and Community Safety

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1 PURPOSE

ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) is committed to ensuring that staff are appropriately supported, including by volunteer peer support officers who can assist their colleagues in coping with employment-related or personal difficulties, or during times of potentially high emotional impact. Peer support officers also actively promote and disseminate health and wellbeing information to staff.

This policy establishes the staff peer support scheme.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all ACTCS staff.

Where required, Divisional Executives will establish operational procedures under this policy.

3 DEFINITIONS

Peer Support Officer

An ACTCS staff member who has volunteered to undertake peer support training to assist their colleagues in coping with employment-related or personal difficulties and receive no financial payment or benefits in lieu for undertaking the role.

Supervision Counsellor

An external provider authorised by the Commissioner to provide supervision and other support to the peer support scheme in accordance with any written arrangements.

4 PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 ACTCS is committed to supporting the wellbeing of staff by providing access to a support network of peers who provide confidential assistance and promote wellbeing.
- 4.2 Peer support officers aid the operations of ACTCS by:
 - a. contacting staff after an incident where there is a perceived potential of being a highly stressful or emotional experience for those involved;
 - b. providing supportive and neutral assistance for staff for employment or personal issues;

- c. providing encouragement and facilitation of referrals to an Employment Assistance Program provider; and
- d. the provision of promotional material relating to health and wellbeing.

5 ACCESS TO PEER SUPPORT OFFICERS

- 5.1 Staff can access a peer support officer:
 - a. through direct contact; or
 - b. by contacting the respective Peer Support Coordinator to request support.
- 5.2 A current list of peer support officers will be made available to staff and on the ACTCS Intranet.
- 5.3 Senior Directors or above may request the attendance of peer support officers to provide support to staff following an incident and/or contact staff involved (*Incident Reporting, Notifications and Debriefs Policy, Emergency Management Policy*).

6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 Divisional Executives are responsible for supporting and ensuring the logistical implementation of the peer support scheme, including but not limited to:
 - a. the appointment of a Peer Support Coordinator/s; and
 - b. authorising initial training for peer support officers and ongoing training as required.
- 6.2 The Peer Support Coordinator is a peer support officer with additional responsibilities to coordinate the peer support scheme and report to their Divisional Executive as required, including:
 - a. maintaining a record of outcomes of the peer support scheme that anonymises staff involved, and ensuring all records are completed;
 - b. providing leadership and role modelling to peer support officers;
 - c. coordinating and allocating referrals for peer support;
 - d. ensuring peer support officers have completed all necessary training prior to commencing their role;
 - e. facilitating problem solving and development; and
 - f. referring complaints in accordance with section 11.

Peer support officers

- 6.3 Peer support officers are approved staff members who have volunteered and completed training in accordance with section 7 to assist and support colleagues.
- 6.4 Peer support officers:
- a. do not have additional authority or privileges beyond their normal duties; and
 - b. continue to report through their normal line manager.
- 6.5 Peer support officers must abide by this policy and the Peer Support Officer Code of Conduct (*Annex A – Peer Support Officer Handbook*).
- 6.6 Peer support officers are responsible for:
- a. maintaining confidentiality of information unless it:
 - i. jeopardises the wellbeing or safety of any person; or
 - ii. is with the colleague's written consent; or
 - iii. is required to be reported in accordance with the *Ethical Conduct and Dress Standards Policy*; or
 - iv. there is a legal obligation to report the information, including if child abuse of any kind is disclosed or there is reason to suspect that a child may be experiencing abuse; or
 - v. in response to a clear and immediate danger to a person or persons;
 - b. responding to requests for support from colleagues and providing supportive and neutral assistance for staff;
 - c. operating within the limits of the peer support scheme and not acting outside of their role;
 - d. ensuring their role is not used by colleagues to advance their self-interest;
 - e. always acting in a professional manner and to the best of their ability, showing respect for and protecting the welfare of colleagues they are supporting;
 - f. participating and maintaining up-to-date supervision as required; and
 - g. ensuring a record of all contact with colleagues is submitted to the Peer Support Coordinator in accordance with section 12.

- 6.7 A peer support officer is not to:
- a. advocate or act as a spokesperson for a staff member in industrial, legal, managerial or other matters;
 - b. provide case management, counselling, psychological or mental health support;
 - c. provide or facilitate mediation of employment matters;
 - d. conduct group psychological debriefs/support sessions (but they may attend if requested to support a colleague, not participate in or lead the session);
 - e. investigate, or 'take sides' in relation to any matter raised by a staff member; or
 - f. use the position to advance their self-interest.
- 6.8 Where a peer support officer is assisting a colleague during their duty period, they must balance the requirement to complete their normal duties and the provision of assistance and support to a colleague.
- 6.9 Where the provision of peer support may impact on operational duties, a peer support officer must immediately report this to their line manager and the Peer Support Coordinator.

7 APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Staff may apply to join the peer support scheme annually by submitting:
- a. an A12.F1: Peer Support Officer Application Form by email to the Team Leader, People and Culture; and
 - b. requesting an A12.F2: Peer Support Officer Referee Form be submitted by:
 - i. two (2) colleagues of the staff member; and
 - ii. the staff member's line manager.
- 7.2 A12.F2: Peer Support Officer Referee Forms must be submitted to the Team Leader, People and Culture, directly via email and not provided to the related staff member.
- 7.3 On receipt of the three (3) forms under section 7.1, the Team Leader, People and Culture, will collate the submissions and provide to the Supervision Counsellor.

Assessment

- 7.4 The Team Leader, People and Culture, and Supervision Counsellor will meet with the staff member to discuss their application and provide a recommendation to the respective Divisional Executive on the staff member's suitability to participate in the scheme.
- 7.5 The Divisional Executive will review all information under this section and approve or reject the staff member's application.
- 7.6 Staff will be informed in writing of the outcome of their application.

Training

- 7.7 Where a staff member has been approved to join the peer support scheme, they must complete the Peer Support Officer Training Program prior to commencing the role of a peer support officer.
- 7.8 Following completion under section 7.7, the staff member will receive a certificate of completion confirming their appointment as a peer support officer.

Review

- 7.9 The Team Leader, People and Culture, and Supervision Counsellor will review the progress of peer support officers:
- a. six (6) months from appointment; and
 - b. at intervals of no more than two (2) years thereafter.
- 7.10 Where there are concerns about a peer support officer's progress in the role, a recommendation under section 7.9 will be provided to the respective Divisional Executive.
- 7.11 The Divisional Executive may request additional supervision, approve a peer support officer to continue in the role, or suspend the peer support officer.
- 7.12 A peer support officer will be informed in writing of the outcome of the review under section 7.9.

8 DISCLOSURE

- 8.1 Under no circumstances should a peer support officer disclose the confidential details provided by a colleague with their line manager unless in accordance with the Peer Support Officer Code of Conduct (*Annex A – Peer Support Officer Handbook*).

- 8.2 A peer support officer should inform a colleague where an obligation to disclose information arises (*Annex A – Peer Support Officer Handbook*).
- 8.3 Where a peer support officer receives information in their role that may:
- a. impact security or good order at a correctional centre; or
 - b. have an immediate impact on the operations of a correctional centre,
- they must:
- a. inform the colleague that they need to escalate the matter noting confidentiality obligations; and
 - b. immediately inform their line manager of the potential issues while maintaining the confidentiality of their colleague and the details of the issue where it may identify the colleague.

9 SUPERVISION

- 9.1 Peer support officers are required to participate in regular supervision with the Supervision Counsellor in accordance with any arrangements authorised by their Divisional Executive (*Annex B – Supervision Guidelines*).
- 9.2 Supervision will be conducted during a peer support officer’s normal duty period.
- 9.3 The Peer Support Coordinator will maintain a record of supervision for all peer support officers.
- 9.4 In the interests of health and wellbeing, a peer support officer who has not participated in consecutive scheduled supervision sessions over six (6) months may be suspended from providing peer support until they have completed supervision.
- 9.5 The Team Leader, People and Culture Unit, will inform a peer support officer in writing of any temporary suspension under section 9.4.

10 WITHDRAWAL

- 10.1 Peer support officers can temporarily or permanently withdraw from the peer support scheme at any time and for any reason.
- 10.2 Peer support officers must inform the Peer Support Coordinator and People and Culture Unit and advise of the temporary or permanent nature of the withdrawal.

- 10.3 Where a peer support officer withdraws from the scheme for less than one (1) year, they will be required to participate in one (1) supervision session prior to recommencing the role.
- 10.4 Where a peer support officer withdraws from the scheme for one (1) year or more, they will be required to undertake:
 - a. refresher training prior to recommencing; and
 - b. supervision with the Supervision Counsellor.

11 CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

- 11.1 Where a staff member has concerns or wishes to make a complaint about a peer support officer, they should refer their complaint in writing to the respective Divisional Executive for review and a response.
- 11.2 Any breach or suspected breach of the Peer Support Officer Code of Conduct should be immediately referred to the respective Divisional Executive or above (*Annex A – Peer Support Officer Handbook, Ethical Conduct and Dress Standards Policy*).
- 11.3 Where a complaint has been received under sections 11.1-11.2, the respective Divisional Executive may temporarily suspend the peer support officer from acting in their role until the complaint has been finalised.

12 RECORDS

- 12.1 All records under this policy must be factual and concise and without personal opinions or judgements.
- 12.2 Peer support officers must:
 - a. maintain a diary with accurate records of their contact with colleagues; and
 - b. provide the Peer Support Coordinator with the number of monthly contacts by close of business on the last Monday of each month.
- 12.3 Peer support officer diaries must be securely stored when not in use.
- 12.4 Where a peer support officer
 - a. withdraws from the scheme; or
 - b. takes annual leave; or
 - c. upon retirement or resignation,

they must provide their diary to the Team Leader, People and Culture, for archiving.

- 12.5 The Peer Support Coordinator will provide a monthly report of the peer support scheme to their Divisional Executive by close of business on the last Friday of each month.
- 12.6 Divisional Executives will raise specific concerns and issues raised under section 12.5 with the Commissioner.

13 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- A – Annex A – ACTCS Peer Support Officer Handbook
- B – Annex B – Supervision Guidelines
- C – A12.F1: Peer Support Officer Application Form
- D – A12.F2: Peer Support Officer Referee Form
- E – Ethical Conduct and Dress Standards Policy
- F – Incident Reporting, Notifications and Debriefs Policy
- G – Emergency Management Policy



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ACT Corrective Services
17 July 2020

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