

What is the Virginia Peer Support Association or "VAPSA"?

The Virginia Peer Support Association, "VAPSA" is a 501 c (3) organization. We are purposed to be the destination for all Peer Support needs in Virginia. From initial training and certification to continuing education; VAPSA can even provide "model policy" guidance to your agency! VAPSA helps you establish a true "Peer Support Program" and stays involved with you and your agency to support you on an ongoing basis. VAPSA will help connect you to the "peer support network" or other agencies in your area or across the commonwealth who have established peer support programs.

How does "PSP" relate to "CISD / CISM"

Many terms are used to describe peer support. Terms like *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing*, "CISD", Crisis Intervention and *Critical Incident Stress Management* or "CISM" are often used interchangeably with peer support, creating some confusion about authentic peer support programming.

Peer Support Professionals (PSP's) are trained to address the whole spectrum of challenges that might stress an Officer. From those "events of daily living", stressors that we all deal with, to "extreme events" such as line of duty death or an Officer involved shooting "OIS." Trained Peer Supporters are trained to be proactive and reactive. CISM and CISD are valuable but much more limited in their scope and focus than what PSP's offer.



NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Check out our website:

<http://www.vapeersupport.org>

You can also point any QR enabled device at the code below!



You may also contact us:

Phone: (804) 894-3792

Address: 14711 Plantation Parkway
Amelia, VA 23002



The Virginia Peer Support Association, (VAPSA)

"Supporting those who serve"



VAPSA introduces the "Peer Support Professional" (PSP) Program

Critical Incident Stress Management

What Is Peer Support?

It's a way for Public Safety Professionals to confidentially talk about personal or professional problems with trained peers who have "been there" and understand what it's like.

Peer Support is:

- √ A large diverse support network of caring and trained peer supporters available on a 24-hour basis for members of the law enforcement and emergency services community and their families.
- √ An opportunity for peer supporters to reduce stress levels and prevent conflict by offering a variety of ways to resolve issues.
- √ The assurance of respect for anonymity, to preserve confidentiality and building a trust level that allows real support to be offered and received in every area of one's life.
- √ Continuing education of peer supporters to help them offer the most effective support.
- √ A referral system of professionals and agencies chosen for their broad understanding of the concerns shared by members of the law enforcement and emergency services community and their families.

Why Peer Support?

Stress is the key word. Positive stress, as a survival tool, is essential in life. Negative stress can create many health-related problems such as memory loss, difficulty in making decisions, forgetfulness, troubled interpersonal relationships, self-destructive behavior, emotional problems, job burnout, self medication, and the list goes on.

"Effective" Peer Support reduces the negative stressors in life and/or assists in positive coping.

Who are the "Trained Co-Workers" Who Become Peer Support Professionals (PSP's)?

They are your partners and friends who have been trained to actively **LISTEN**, to **ASSESS** the nature and depth of the stress, to **REFER** you to the appropriate services of a professional in your area of need.

What does "Refer Me" Mean?

When a Trained Peer Support Professional (PSP) "refers" you it is part of their job. They do this with your knowledge. The PSP's responsibility is to listen and support and if their peer needs assistance above what they are trained to provide to refer them to that professional or service that would be most helpful. In Peer Support we talk about the "30-30-30 rule." Thirty percent of people seeking support will talk with a PSP and feel better, 30% will want to talk to a Clergy member, and the other 30% will seek the assistance of a counselor or other Mental Health Professional. VAPSA has a mental health professional on staff for these needs and can provide consultation with trained peer supporters.

So, 30+30+30= 90 -- but what about the other 10%? While peer supporters are not intrusive, they are trained to reach out to all of their fellow professionals and to proactively engage their colleagues to assist where they are welcome.

What Kinds of Concerns Can Be Shared With Peer Supporters?

There is no limit as to the types of "life problems" you can discuss with a peer supporter. Many problems will resolve themselves when just given a chance to be heard.

Some of the most common concerns brought to peer supporters' attention are: divorce, retirement, disability, problems with co-workers or administration, family, marriage, financial, grief, substance dependency, religious or spiritual matters, legal issues, emotional physical health, career goals.

But, What About Confidentiality?

All communication between you and a peer supporter is CONFIDENTIAL and must be considered privileged by the Department, **except** for matters which involve a threat to life or a serious or dangerous violation of the law or policy.

Peer Supporters shall not be interviewed, nor shall they be required to discuss details of a support session with any other employer personnel.

You can even see that the Commonwealth as a whole realizes the value of this as amendments were made to the *Code of Virginia* in § [19.2-271.4](#) "Privileged communications by certain public safety personnel." **and** § [32.1-111.3](#) (13) "Statewide Emergency Medical Services Plan; Trauma Triage Plan; Stroke Triage Plan: Establishing and maintaining a process for crisis intervention and peer supporters for emergency medical services and public safety personnel.."

When And Where Are Peer Support Sessions Held?

Unless the circumstance demands immediate attention, sessions are conducted during off-duty time at a location that will provide the greatest amount of privacy and comfort for effective sharing.

How Can Peer Support Be Contacted?

The names and emails of VAPSA trained PSP's will appear on the Virginia peer support association's website:

<http://www.vapeersupport.org>