



WHAT YOU SHOULD DO AFTER YOU HAVE COMPLETED A PEER SUPPORT TRAINING.

IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER!

- **Connect with your department administration:** Inform your supervisors that you are now a trained peer supporter and discuss how you can best integrate into the existing support team or how to start a new team. *Be persistent!*
- **Train Supervisors on peer support role in crisis and chronic support.** Understand the difference between what they want to know and what they NEED to know.
- Understand the difference between an performance issue and a mental health issue.
- **Pick three Potentially Traumatic Events and** always check in on that shift when these occur.
Ask: Does everyone need to see this scene?
- **Build relationships with coworkers:** Get to know your fellow first responders on a personal level, creating an open and trusting environment where they feel comfortable reaching out for support.
- **Be approachable and visible:** Make yourself available. Your peers will not schedule their crisis, they will present at inconvenient times. Listen and offer support when needed.
- **Practice active listening skills:** Focus on truly understanding the experiences of your peers without judgment, providing a safe space to share their feelings.
- **Know your limitations:** If a situation requires professional mental health intervention, be prepared to refer individuals to appropriate resources.
- **Promote your peer support program:** Encourage other first responders to spread awareness about the benefits of utilizing the program. Add information to initial Academy and on-boarding trainings.
- **Get more Sleep:** Understand the importance of sleep and encourage others to prioritize sleep.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality with your peers. If you break confidentiality, you will lose their trust and lose your effectiveness in being a peer supporter.
- **Gather resources:** Know the resources for your area and vet them to make sure they are culturally competent for first responders. Keep a list to pass out. Call the EAP to understand the process.
- **Stay informed about mental health issues:** Continuously update your knowledge regarding common first responder stressors, mental health conditions, and available treatment resources.
- **Self-Care:** Three important elements are sleep, nutrition, exercise. You cannot care for another until you take care of yourself. Can you down regulate yourself?
- **Recruit your team:** TEAM-Together Everyone Achieves More. Teach your peers the criteria to serve as a peer supporter. Have your peers choose your team members based on the criteria. Peers should be trustworthy, passionate about helping others, and have stable mental health.
- **Develop your team:** Make sure each member complies with Priveldged Communication requirements. Develop an SOP that will be relevant to your team's basic operational functions and processes. Track CEU's as required by law.
- **Train your team:** Set training requirements. Training is an ongoing process. The minimum requirements - Introductory Peer Support Training, Behavioral Health Awareness, Resiliency Training.
- **Maintain your team:** Regular meetings, Regular trainings, Regular wellness checks, and Regular team morale checks.
- **Knowledge:** You can have all the knowledge, but without action it is useless.
- **Bonus:** Not all interventions will succeed. Interventions will never be easy. You cannot help someone unless they want to be helped

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TRI-STATE
PEER SUPPORT TEAM



TRAUMA INFORMED CARE PRINCIPLES FOR FIRST RESPONDER PEER SUPPORT

- **Safety** — Creating an environment where the first responder feels physically and emotionally safe to share without fear of judgement, retaliation, or breach of confidentiality. Predictability and Consistency in action: Policies must be applied equally to all employees in similar situations, regardless of their role or relationship to management.
- **Trustworthiness and Transparency** — Being honest about the limits of confidentiality, the peer supporter's role, and what to expect in the process, so the first responder can make informed decisions about disclosure.
- **Peer Support and Mutuality** — Recognizing that healing happens in relationship and community. Shared lived experience between first responders reduces stigma and builds genuine connection.
- **Collaboration and Empowerment** — Working with the first responder rather than directing them. Honoring their agency and autonomy in deciding how to seek help and what steps to take.
- **Choice** — Ensuring the first responder always feels they have options — whether in how they engage, what they share, or what resources they access — countering the helplessness that trauma can create.
- **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Sensitivity** — Recognizing how identity, background, rank, role, and the culture of first responder service shapes how first responders experience and express trauma, and seek help.
- **Strengths-Based Perspective** — Focusing on resilience and what the first responder is doing well, rather than framing them as broken or damaged. Building on existing coping capacities and past success.
- **Non-Judgment and Unconditional Positive Regard** — Approaching the first responder without blame, shame, or evaluation of their reaction to trauma — recognizing that responses like hypervigilance, anger, or withdrawal are normal adaptations to abnormal experiences.

These principles align with SAMHSA's foundational trauma-informed care framework and are adapted to the specific culture and needs of first responder peer support programs.



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