



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Joliet Firefighter Peer Support Group (JFPSG)

Website: jfdpeersupport.com

Email: info@jfdpeersupport.com

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1. GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Strategic Highlights

The Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group (JFPSG) was officially established in September 2019. The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Behavioral Health Program provided 16-hours of in-depth peer support training with an additional 2-hour independent study course required for certification.

Operating Highlights

Throughout the balance of 2019, the JFPSG has provided peer support aid to 6 firefighters and offered support to many others by way of outreach as a result of critical incidents.

The central axiom of the Joliet Firefighter Peer Support Group is “Firefighters helping Firefighters.” This axiom by extension, includes families of Firefighters. A healthy Firefighter family means a healthy Firefighter.

Looking Ahead

The JFPSG is looking forward to continued growth and development in 2020 to enable us to fulfill our mission. We are committed to the well-being of Joliet Firefighters, retirees and their families.

John Lukancic, MA, CCISM
Joliet Peer Support Group Coordinator
February 1, 2020
Jfdpeersupport.com
(815) 530-2196

2. INITIAL TRAINING



Initial group training for the JFPSG was provided by Master Instructors from the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) and was supported by both Local 44 Firefighters and Local 2369 Fire Officers Unions. The Joliet Foreign Fire Tax Board provided the funding for the project and the class was held at Joliet Fire Station 1 on September 12 and 13, 2019.

- Initial training and certification for members of the group included:
 - A 2-hour online Introduction to Peer Support training class;
 - A 16-hour in-person classroom portion taught by instructors from the IAFF.

- Class participants included members and retirees of the Joliet Fire Department, Fire Chaplains, other religious volunteers, professional clinicians, and one City of Joliet Councilperson.
 - Brother Ed Arambasich, OFM - Chaplain
 - Chris Bay - Firefighter
 - James Boyd - Firefighter
 - Matt Christensen - Firefighter
 - Tom Douglas - Retiree
 - Justin Farrar - Firefighter
 - Reverend Chris Groh - Chaplain
 - Jeremy Hoffman - Firefighter
 - Aaron Kozlowski - Firefighter
 - Nate Kren - Firefighter
 - Jim Larson - Retiree
 - John Lukancic - Firefighter
 - John Miller - Firefighter
 - Nancy Nelson, LCSW - Clinician
 - Stan Nowicki - Firefighter
 - Mike Nurczyk - Retiree
 - Courtney Doyle-O'Brien, LPC - Clinician
 - Chris O'Hara - Firefighter
 - Matt Pasteris - Firefighter
 - Dominic Perona - Firefighter
 - Jan Quillman - Joliet City Councilwoman
 - Burke Schuster - Firefighter
 - Mary Frances Seeley, OSF, PhD. - Suicidologist
 - Terry Smith, PhD. - Clinician
 - Mike Stapp - Firefighter
 - Mike Stromberg - Retiree
 - Pat Wojewoda - Firefighter
 - Floyd Woods - Firefighter

Inaugural Joliet Firefighter Peer Support Class

September 2019



L to R: Front row: Danny Adams (Instructor), FF Jeremy Hoffman, AO Burke Schuster, FF Chris Bay, Lt. James Boyd, AO Stan Nowicki. 2nd row: 1 (Clinician), Sr. Mary Frances Seeley, Councilwoman Jan Quillman, Courtney O'Brien (Clinician), Joe Casalino (Instructor), Capt. John Miller, AO Pat Wojewoda, Brother Ed Arambasich. 3rd Row: Mike Stromberg, Jim Larson, Lt. Mike Stapp, Lt. Floyd Woods, FF Justin Farrar, AO Matt Christensen. 4th row: FF Matt Pasteris, Mike Nurczyk, Capt. Aaron Kozlowski, Tom Douglas, FF Nate Kren, FF Dominick Perona, FF Chris O'Hara. Not Pictured: Dr. Terry Smith, Fr. Chris Groh, DC Greg



Peer supporters during the certification class at Station 1

3. JFPSG: LOGO

It is important to make the JFPSG recognizable to those we serve. The logo (shown below) has strong meaning. It includes a stylized red Maltese Cross, a recognized symbol of the fire service, with a firefighter's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) mask in the center with crossed axes. The SCBA mask represents the protective nature of the SCBA during firefighting activities. The JFPSG strives to become a protective resource for our firefighters and their families. Prevention and resilience building are key factors in peer support success.

The four awareness ribbons surrounding the Maltese Cross represent four of the most common challenges facing firefighters in the United States today. These include suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and cancer. Peer support can be an asset when firefighters and their families must deal with these, and other issues.



4. PARTNERS

The JFPSG has accepted the aid of expert partners in the Aspire Center for Positive Change, the Upper Room Crisis Line, and the Franciscan Friars, Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to further promote our mission to provide quality resources.

Aspire- Center for Positive Change: (815) 353-3339

The mental health professionals at the Aspire- Center for Positive Change, located in Channahon, have volunteered to help establish policy and procedures as well as help with complex clinical issues and team direction. Their group consists of several crisis counselors and social workers. Our main contacts are Courtney Doyle-O'Brien, LPC and Nancy Nelson, LCSW.

The Upper Room Crisis Hotline (888) 808-8724

The Upper Room Crisis Line is a 24/7 crisis hotline that operates out of Joliet. They consist of trained experts in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. The line is headed by Terry Smith, PhD., Executive Director and Sister Mary Frances Seeley, OSF, PhD, Suicidologist and founder.

The Franciscan Friars, Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

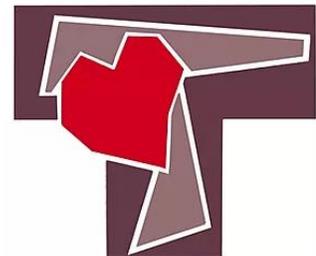
Additionally, peer supporter Brother Ed Arambasich, OFM through the Franciscan Friars, Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, has offered room at the Friary at 404 N. Hickory St. as a "safe haven" for Firefighters who require lodging. Firefighters will be able to stay in this facility if they are unable to return home.



Aspire- Center for Positive Change



The Upper Room Crisis Hotline



Franciscan Friars. Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

5. MONTHLY MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Monthly Meetings

The JFPSG holds monthly meetings at the Franciscan Friary at 404 N. Hickory St. to discuss group related issues, use and policy. Plans include using the meetings for continuing education events. All members of the group are encouraged to attend and participate.

MEETING	DATE
October 2019	10/19/2019
November 2019	11/16/2019
December 2019	12/17/2019

Events

The JFPSG participated in the Rialto Square Theatre's Veterans Day Event, on November 11, 2019. Several members of the group participated in the event, giving us the opportunity to promote the group and our desire to help any who need our assistance, whether fire service related or not.



Lt. Eric Mattson, Firefighter Michael Schultz, Retiree Mike Nurczyk, Apparatus Operator Mark Troha, Retiree Ricky Sheets, Br. Ed Arambasich, Apparatus Operator Bryan Ogrizovich and John Lukancic.

6. VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Vision Statement:

A Fire Department where all Joliet Firefighters and their families are holistically cared for by their peer network regarding all forms of mental and emotional health.



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Mission Statement:

The Joliet Firefighter Peer Support Group believes that the path to Joliet Firefighter mental and emotional health begins with firefighters, clinicians, clergy, and public officials working together to provide support, education, and connection to resources to our firefighters and their families. The public can depend on firefighters. Firefighters can depend on their peer support network.

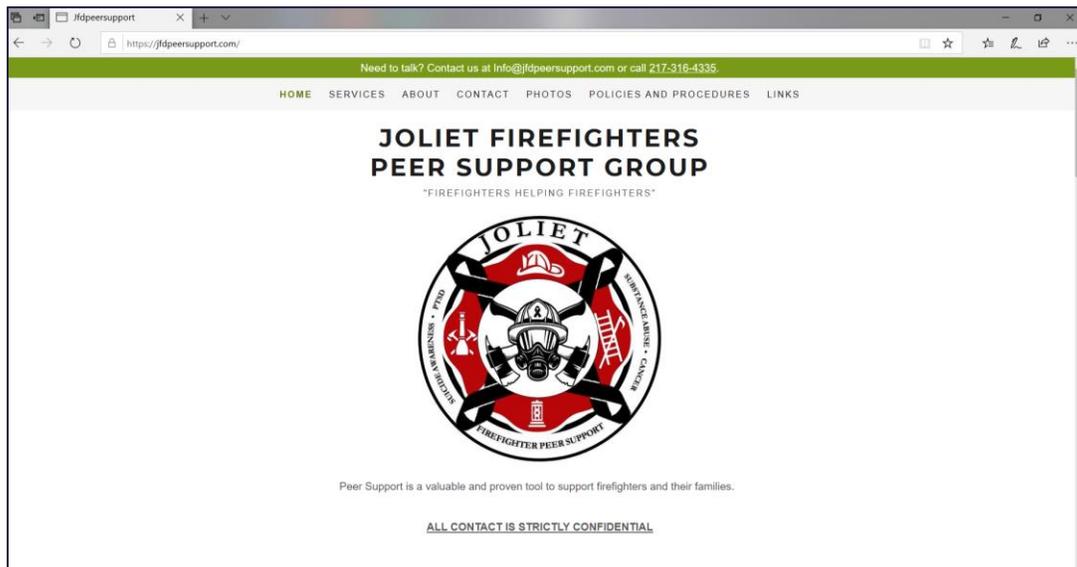


7. WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

Website: jfdpeersupport.com

Email: Info@jfdpeersupport.com

The JFPSG has developed both a website and Facebook page to make ourselves more accessible to our members. Both sites contain information related to our program and links to extended resources.



Facebook Page: [@JFDPeerSupport](https://www.facebook.com/JFDPeerSupport)



8. STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)/Operational Manual

The JFPSG is in the process of developing guidelines through a comprehensive operational manual for the governance of our group. This process can take much time to do properly but we are committed to the development of our program. Users of our program can rest-assured that confidentiality is paramount to the success of our group and that we are currently available to serve our members.

SOG #1

The issue of initial training is addressed in this policy.

SOG #2

Here, we define the roles and expectations of confidentiality.

“Confidentiality is paramount to the success of our group.”



Upcoming Manual

Illinois Public Act 101-0375 addresses the role of peer support groups within the emergency response field. Upcoming guidelines will ensure that the group conforms to this important law. Mary Frances Seeley, OSF, PhD., an experienced and knowledgeable mental health practitioner is aiding with the development of our operational manual.

Takeaways

A robust and well-crafted operational core will enable us to perform our mission in a more effective manner. Even though the process is underway, we assure all who come to us that we are prepared to help.

9. PLANS FOR 2020

The JFPSG has a structured plan for growth in 2020. This plan includes:

- Joliet Fire Department policy that aligns with the mission and vision of the group. This includes the contact of members of the JFPSG in the event of critical incidents.
- Site visits so each fire crew can be exposed to the peer support group and ask questions.
- Internal policy completion (operational handbook).
- Continued monthly meetings to continually enhance the program.
- Spouse/significant other inclusion in the form of workshops.
- Continuing education.
- Exposure of team members to the critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) process.
- Joliet Fire Department internal network access under “Department Info.”
- Posted information at all fire stations with JFPSG contact information.
- Establish further methods for providing a continuum of care for firefighter mental health. This includes resilience and prevention, peer support response, and outreach and follow-up and referral.

We look forward to a productive and helpful 2020 and value the support and trust of the entire Joliet Fire Department Family.

10. PHOTOS



Joliet Firefighter Peer Support Group



IAFF Peer Support Instructor Danny Adams



IAFF Peer Support Instructors Danny Adams and Joe Casalino with Joliet Councilwoman Jan Quillman