

	<b>911 Southern Wisconsin PEER SUPPORT Team</b>	Implementation Date	12.15.17
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**PURPOSE**

To outline the concept and goals of the 911 Certified Peer Support Team that includes Waukesha County Communications and Dane County Public Safety Communications centers. Includes the requirements of certification, the team commitments, and contact information.

**SCOPE**

This SOP applies to all Waukesha County Communications and Dane County Public Safety Communications employees as well as those in-house employees that may be in contact with the contents of emergency communications.

**DEFINITIONS**

911 CPS	911 Certified Peer Supporter
DCPSC	Dane County Public Safety Communications
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
Leadership	Directors, Managers, Supervisors
PST	Peer Support Team
PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
Peer Connection	A brief encounter or conversation
Peer Meeting	A more extensive interaction
911 SWIPST	911 Southern Wisconsin Peer Support Team
Team Coordinator	A member of the leadership team overseeing operations
WCC	Waukesha County Communications

## **POLICY/ PROCEDURE**

### **BACKGROUND:**

PSAP employees will be exposed to highly stressful situations in the line of duty that may result in psychological trauma. This 911 Certified Peer Support program has been formed to help 911 PSAP employees effectively cope with such stressors. The combination of professional and personal struggles can impact the Telecommunicator's mental and physical health, relationships, as well as work performance.

Experiencing adverse side effects due after any type of call may vary, depending on the employee, their life experience, or their varied work experience. Calls can affect different people in different ways and may be in an area that other employees wouldn't be affected.

We believe it takes great courage to seek out assistance and doing so is a sign of character strength rather than a sign of weakness, (a falsehood still widely believed among emergency services providers and responders). A Peer support team (PST) connects those employees in need with individuals they can reach out to who are able to personally relate to them. Beyond that, they are able to connect them to resources to effectively assist them in managing stressors. Properly trained telecommunicators are uniquely capable of helping their 911 peers shift from feeling alone in their struggles, to knowing that someone is alongside them who truly "gets it".

So, while Peer Support is not a substitute for professional counseling or therapy, it does serve to defuse stress and staff conflicts, while encouraging people to move toward responsible solutions and professional therapy assistance as needed. Peer Supporters can make an impact during the tough moments of 911 that regularly occur in the communication center.

This program empowers participating agencies to fulfill the *Standard on Acute/Traumatic and Chronic Stress Management* established by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA-STA-002) in 2013. This standard states: Public Safety Answering Points shall establish Comprehensive Stress Management Programs... [Including] ...PSAP Peer Support Programs. These programs utilize call center staff who are trained to provide confidential emotional support upon request of a PSAP employee without administering advice or solutions. Peer support is not a substitute for professional counseling but serves to defuse stress and staff conflicts while encouraging people to move toward responsible solutions and professional therapy assistance as needed.

*NENA Standard on 9-1-1 Acute/Traumatic and Chronic Stress Management, NENA-STA-002 DSC Approval: 03/12/2013 PRC Approval: 05/23/2013 NENA Executive Board Approval: 08/05/2013 Prepared by: The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) PSAP Operations Committee, 9-1-1 Acute/Traumatic and Chronic Stress Working Group. See <http://www.nena.org/?StressManagement>*

### **CONCEPT and GOALS:**

In accordance with this NENA standard, SWIPST is a confidential assistance program for PSAP employees comprised of objective and non-judgmental vetted PST members that have collaborated to assist employees while working through personal and occupational stressors. This team consists of trained and certified personnel from Dane County Public Safety Communications and Waukesha County Communications. Team members represent various ranks and diverse backgrounds.

This cooperative effort between Dane & Waukesha Counties has been entered into with the intention of establishing best practice in the conveyance of 911 Peer Support designed specifically for our agencies' 911 professionals. The team is comprised of an Advisory Group, Team Coordinators, Peer Supporters, and a Professional Resource Group. They will be referred to as the 911 SWIPST.

The **Advisory Group** consists of the founder and trainer of the certification program, Jim Marshall, Dane County and Waukesha County PSAP Leaders, and the 911 CPS Clinical Liaison. The advisory group will assist in guiding the team and their commitments include:

- Offer guidance and assistance to Peer Support Team Coordinators and Team members
- Act as liaison for peer support referrals
- Assess statistical data from the Peer Support Coordinators
- Assist with the assessment and screening of the Peer Support applicants
- Create and Facilitate training of Team Coordinator group & Peer Support Team
- Develop resources to assist individuals when problem areas are identified
- Approve resource guide/referral list of professional services

The **Team Coordinators** are Peer Supporters from the leadership team from Dane and Waukesha County appointed by the Advisory Group and serve to oversee the operations and management of the overall Team.

Commitments include:

- General oversight of the 911 CPS program.
- Liaison between the Peer Support Team and the Advisory Group.
- Serve as a member of the Peer Support Team.
- Manage and assign requests for Peer Support assistance via all communication means.
- Gather and maintain statistical data from the Peer Support Team.
- Document and maintain all certification requirements & training records.
- Coordinate continuing education, scheduling and follow-up for PST members
- Communicate to PSAP employees the resources available through briefing presentations, memos, or other appropriate means about the program and its resources.
- Pass on appropriate referrals to the professional clinician(s).
- Resources – Prepare & Maintain list of Resources and Professional services for specific needs of Emergency Services **LINK → Appendix 911 CPS Resource Guide**
- Facilitate training of additional Peer Support Team Members in collaboration with Jim Marshall.
- Recruit and Coordinate the screening of the Peer Support applicants.

The **911 Peer Support Team** consists of approved peers that have successfully completed and obtained certification for the 911 Certified Peer Supporter. They are available to support the healthy process of stress acknowledgment and management, as well as share a wide range of resources. **See the Appendix 911 CPS Manual.**

Overall goals include: Educate/ Empower/ Mitigate Crisis/ Resource Connection/ Confidentiality. Commitments include:

- Certification through the 911 Peer Support curriculum.
- Continuing to educate self on best practices and processes learned.
- Provide assistance and support.
- Give a listening ear in a non-judgmental manner.

- Conveyance of trust & Confidentiality within listed guidelines.
- Provide resources and/or refer a peer for follow-up support.
- Refer requestor to the appropriate outside resource when necessary.
- Follow-up when referrals are made for outside services.
- Be open, honest, and responsible regarding self-care needs.
- Communicate with Team Coordinators.
- Submit statistical information using the Data Utilization form only.
- Agree to be contacted and, if practical, respond at any hour.
- Contact the PST Coordinator(s) for assistance and guidance. Advise if there are questions, concerns, and issues with program activities and/or any struggles.
- Notify a Team Coordinator should a conflict of interest arise. Anticipate and assist with a successful reassignment which will occur for any conflict of interest.
- Notify the Team Coordinator to voluntarily withdraw from the program.

PST members are trained to use active listening skills, techniques to assist in clarifying issues or questions and the oversight to help explore options while supporting personnel through a problem solving process. The 911 CPS will provide an empathic ear and available resources all while screening for major safety issues which may include: stress induced physical conditions, alcohol or drug abuse, suicidal or homicidal ideation, or a risk of violence to self or others. The CPS may utilize or notify the local CPS clinical Liaison as appropriate when any of the high life-safety events mentioned occur.

Often a simple Peer Connection or Peer Meeting can provide the support that an employee needs in order to be able to use their own personal resources to cope more effectively or make progression down a healthy path. A Peer Connection may be as simple as a face-to-face conversation in the parking lot after work or a text/IM/email between peers.

A Peer Meeting may be a meet for coffee or a longer over-the-phone connection that requires a bit more time to get through things and establish the next right step.

CPS team members will work to avoid peer support relationships that may be challenging due to friendships, work place issues, or any other scenario that may lead to additional concerns, etc. When potential conflicts arise, the 911 CPS will refer that person to another member on the team so that appropriate support can be made available and rendered to all that should need it. A 911 CPS Team Coordinator must be notified via email as soon as possible and may assist in the reassignment to another CPS.

### **CONTACTING THE TEAM:**

Contact can be made to the team at any time whether it is regarding personal or job-related stressors. If preferred, anonymous requests for assistance are accepted as well as third-party requests to initiate communication with any PSAP employee in need.

Reaching out for help from a Peer Supporter is easy and can be made in multiple ways. All employees have access to the team and its' resources at any time of the day or night. The 911 CPS team will be utilizing social media as a means to communicate resource availability, positivity, and encouragement, as well as a means to plug into our user group and connect with others in our field.

- On-duty connections will be facilitated as operations allow.
- Contact of a CPS can be made during off-duty status to facilitate anonymity.

- Contacts made during off-duty status will not result in a modification to paid status for employees seeking out CPS use.
- For all means of communication, when in contact with a Team Coordinator, a short inquiry will be made to most effectively identify the needs of the requestor to connect them with the right 911 Peer Supporter/Resource, or if possible, whomever was requested.
- Options will be given to make contact with either a Dane or Waukesha county CPS to accommodate full anonymity when requested.

\*\* 911 SWIPST will make its best effort to be available when requested. PSAP employees will be instructed to call their EAP, Safe Call Now, Crisis Text Line, or other crisis resources when in crisis and in need of immediate assistance.

**DIRECT:** Face-to-face contact with a CPS team member.

**EMAIL:** SWIPST911@GMAIL.COM This email will be monitored by the on-call Coordinator.

**PHONE:** 1-608-620-1911 This phone will be answered by the on-call Coordinator.

\*\* If a callback is not received within 15 minutes, optional contact may be made to the WCC Dispatch Supervisor at 262-446-5026 and they will contact a CPS Team Coordinator to make contact with the requestor (this includes Dane and Waukesha County employees).

**INDIVIDUAL CPS contact info:** On a case-by-case bases, individual PST members may elect to provide personal contact information for ease in communication, to set up additional meetings, or to be the means of all communication with a peer. This information should be respected by both parties and not shared unless granted permission. The Peer Supporter and requester are encouraged to collaborate regarding the method of contact, length of communication, and the meeting place.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Confidentiality is the highest priority of this Peer Support Team. We hold each other to the high standard that each Peer Supporter will maintain strict confidentiality of all information learned about an individual, within the guidelines of this program. We strive to protect the integrity of our group as a whole. Each member represents the entirety of the team. 911 SWIPST and its participants are not subject to the exemptions of privileged communications as defined in Wisconsin State Statute, Chapter 905 (generally applicable to physicians, clergy, attorneys, etc.).

Leadership outside of SWIPST shall not be privy to communications between peer support personnel and the peer seeking support except for when SWIPST deems it necessary.

Matters include but are not limited to the following examples:

- Danger to self
- Danger to others
- Suspected child/elder abuse
- Drug offenses (sales/transportation/use)
- Domestic violence
- Cases where law requires divulgence
- Divulgence is requested by the peer
- Felony criminal activity

In support of this statement of confidentiality, only non-identifying utilization data will be gathered when Peer Support contact is made, with the sole intent of evaluating program efficiency and effectiveness.

A PST member will use their discretion to keep only those written formal or private records as needed to assure the safety of a peer or in regards to the peer's emergent care.

PST members must inform department members, including PSAP Supervisors and Leadership Team Members, of the limits of their confidentiality as stated above. This SOP constitutes communication of such terms which covers all requirements. This policy grants 911 SWIPST members departmental confidentiality in order to encourage the members of DCPSC and WCC to utilize this support service. PST members may only claim confidentiality when acting in a Peer Support capacity.

### **TEAM NOTIFICATIONS:**

SWIPST can perform a vital support function by assisting PSAP leadership in the care of personnel during and after High Impact Events (HIE). HIE are events experienced by PSAP personnel in the line of duty that are likely to have serious psychological impact on one or more workers.

Due to the 911 stigma about acknowledging emotional struggles and seeking mental health support, telecommunicators may not seek support after such HIEs. The CPS team will therefore seek to follow up after HIEs to check the well-being of all employees irrespective of their age, sex, time in service, shift, seniority, status, or if they've already given the 'I'm OK' to their direct supervisor /OIC.

The on-duty PSAP supervisor shall notify the On-Call PST Coordinator along with a notification to the management team including but not limited to the list below. Group contact may be initiated via WCC Supervisory AlertSense page. See Contact information.

This list is not all-inclusive due to the complexity of our business and the specific job nuances. On-duty Supervisors should notify Coordinators if there is any indication that it's in the employees' best interest.

- Any direct or indirect request for peer support.
- Any adverse reactions that are 'not normal' for that specific employee (may be identified by peer or supervisor & whether requested or not).
- Any series of incidents that have the potential for cumulative effects.
- Any indication that immediate or delayed emotional reactions have or may occur that surpass normal coping mechanisms, typically from an incident in which the circumstances are unusual or distressing.
- High Impact Events that may include (not all inclusive):
  - Serious injury or death of responder or customer. Notification should occur especially for any call involving an Officer, Medic/Firefighter, Children, a Family member, a Friend, Neighbor, or where any association to these can occur.
  - Suicide/Homicide of an employee, or employee's family member, direct or through a department we provide service for.
  - Unusual media coverage.
  - Loss of life after a rescue attempt involving prolonged physical and/or emotional energy.

In coordination with PSAP leadership, SWIPST Coordinators will notify and seek the guidance of the Clinical Liaison in their Peer Support role as needed.

### **TEAM CRITERIA and SELECTION PROCESS**

**911 Peer Support Team:** Notification will be made to staff at both PSAPs when the CPS Team Coordinators and the Advisory Group determines the need for additional Peer Supporter(s). Interested employees will review necessary criteria and determine whether they are able to commit to the expectations of the team.

Employee must submit a SWIPST Interest Form. **See the *Appendix CPS Interest Form*.**

The Interest Form will be reviewed by the CPS Team Coordinators and the Advisory Group. Applicants will be contacted, screened and selected based on the Peer Support Qualification and Selection Criteria from the 911 Training Institute

**Criteria** for Peer Supporter Applicants include:

- Non–probationary employee.
- Desirable personal qualities: such as maturity, judgment, honesty, confidentiality, and personal and professional credibility.
- Maintain confidentiality – make reasonable decisions within the guidelines of this policy.
- Be compassionate and empathetic.
- Act appropriately in conjunction with the team's goals.
- Utilize and grow interpersonal and communication skills.
- Utilize and grow active listening skills.
- Motivated to be an engaged team member.
- Manage time effectively to have minimal impact on normal work duties.
- Successfully complete the certification process.
- Attend and actively participate in any solicitation of feedback, updates, initial and on-going training, and scheduled meetings.

**Additional Criteria** to be considered may include:

- Previous education and training.
- Application of that education and training.
- Resolved prior traumatic experiences.

#### **Training:**

Peer Support training requirements are set forth by the 911 Training Institute

The approved Peer Support Team candidates must successfully complete the following:

Required pre-requisites:

- Survive and Thrive Comprehensive Stress Resilience (2-day course)
- The Power of Peer Support- Introductory course (1-day course)

Required certification training through the 911 Training Institute:

- 911 Certified Peer Support (3-day course)

#### **Duration of Service as a 911 CPS:**

Continued engagement within the SWIPST is determined by the following factors:

1. Individual satisfactory performance.
  - a. Performance is reviewed annually by the CPS Team Coordinators and the Advisory Group using the CPS Review Criteria. (Appendix)
2. Participants desire to continue in this role after satisfactory performance verified.
3. Approval for ongoing assignment from PSAP Leadership.

**De-selection**

Peer supporters may be required to step down from the assignment when it is deemed necessary through collaborative agreement of the Advisory group and the Team Coordinators. In order to protect the integrity of the team, performance of the Peer Supporter that is not in line with the expectations or commitments will require De-selection. There are foreseeable situations in which a peer supporter would need to step down for reason that are confidential perhaps not requiring all members of the advisory board or coordinator to know fully. It is necessary for

**Voluntary Withdrawal**

Peer Supporters may voluntarily withdraw from the participation at any time. They are required to notify the PST Coordinator Group through written correspondence including all ongoing Peer Support relationships to assure continuity of care.