Peer Support Initiatives

Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association 2021 Winter Symposium

Your Panel for Today's Discussion

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How we made it to this point...

- 2018 OFCA Study on Peer Support
 - 7,652 survey respondents on the need for peer support initiatives and/or resources within their departments or with public safety personnel they know
- National White Paper from ICMA mentioned Mental and Behavioral Support
- Research done through universities on public safety personnel and mental health
 - 60 70% of departmental personnel are doing well
 - 30 40% need something like peer support

Defining Peer Support

What is Peer Support?

- Provides emotional support during and after times of personal and professional crisis for responders who express a need for assistance and assists with obtaining additional resources to mitigate a crisis
- Not delivered by professional clinicians
- Preventative measure

What does it mean for us?

- Formal vs. Informal
- Personnel involved
- Resource referrals
- Emergency care

Models and Types of Resources

Peer Support

- Relatively new model
- Peers with other peers in crisis
- Generally trained personnel with an understanding of PTS and stress in Public Safety roles
- Often involves referral to other resources for assistance
 - "Hand off's" to professionals

CISD/CISM

- Historical program and model in use since the 1970's
- Provides diffusing for critical incident
- Does not generally offer follow up
- Incorporates many elements of peer support

Professional Care

- Engaged through referrals or standing agreements
- Licensed mental health providers
- In-patient facilities
- Out-patient care and treatment programs
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

"One size does not fit all!"

The Role of the Peer Supporter



- How am I really helping my fellow employee?
 - Performance Issues
 - Before, during and after any issues
 - Non-punitive actions versus punitive measures further down the road
 - Ability to provide access to resources
 - Personal connection
- Good Labor-Management Relations
 - IAFF / IAFC Peer Support Model
 - Wellness Fitness Initiative 4th Edition

Peer Support Programs

- Help to normalize and increase helpseeking behaviors
- Understand the local resources and can connect fellow employees as needed
- May be preventative by educating about signs & symptoms of stress and critical incident stress



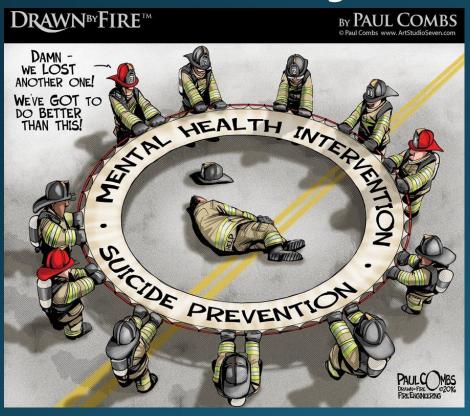
- Build resiliency
- Improve morale by improving connections within departments

What's Next?



- Current Legislation
 - ORC 2317.02
- Proposed Legislation
 - Adds section for Peer Support under "privileged communications"
- Developing Teams
 - Department
 - Local
 - Regional
- Training
 - OHMAS working on statewide requirements for teams
- Development of a comprehensive list of peer support teams

Mental Health Awareness & Resilience Training



- Public Safety is at a much higher risk of developing PTS and suffering negative stress reactions
- Need a good understanding of the problem of PTS and stress
- Knowledge of the signs and symptoms that someone is not coping well with stress
- Develop strategies to help individuals better confront stress and prevent it from becoming a bigger issue

Wrapping up with Q&A

What things are going on in your area?

What challenges are you facing?

Where can you get more information?

How can we assist you?

Chiefs, what concerns do you have?

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Thank you for attending this presentation on

Peer Support Initiatives

Resources

- Links to OFCA website for more info
 - "Members Only" section under Safety, Health & Wellness there are multiple links to Behavioral Health Resources and Documents
- Model Policy <u>Tri-State Peer Support Team</u> Policy
- Volunteer Resources
 - National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Share the Load Program
- International Association of Chiefs of Police Peer Support Guidelines
- International Association of Firefighters Peer Support Training
- International Critical Stress Foundation
- North Caroline First Responder Peer Support
- Univ. of Central Florida RESTORES Program
- First Responders Mental Health Alliance

Resources

- Prevalence of Mental Illness and Use of Mental Health Services in Law Enforcement
- Mental Health in Occupations at Risk of Traumatization
- Ruderman Foundation report on LODD Suicides
- Peer Counseling compared to Group Meetings
- Gordon Graham's Blog on Confidentiality
- Law Enforcement Mental Health & Wellness Resources
- Peer Led Health & Safety Initiatives Positive Impact on Behavior
- First Responder Peer & Trauma Support System (PATSS)
- SAMHSA Behavioral Health Paper
- FIRST Response: The Firefighter Intervention and Response Support Team

Resources

- Joint IAFF / IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative Document
- CopsAlive.com Does Police Peer Support Work?
- Lexipol How to Launch a Successful Peer Support Program
- Responding to Mental Health and Wellness Challenges: Ideas from the Field
- National Consortium on Preventing LE Suicide Toolkit
- Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Report to Congress
- US DOJ Commission on LE and Administration of Justice:
 - Chapter 14 LE Health and Wellness (pg. 195)