

# Peer Support Initiatives

Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association  
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# 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 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

# Peer Support Programs

- Help to normalize and increase help-seeking 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 – [Tri-State Peer Support Team 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 Carolina 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)