POLICY/PURPOSE:
The objective of the Peer Support Team (PST) is to provide emotional, physical, and spiritual support and care for the Cedar Rapids Police Department’s (CRPD) staff and family members. To reduce the impact of such major events, CRPD has established a department PST to assist department personnel at the scene and/or after encounters of these types of incidents. This team is trained to provide this service as well as being the eyes and ears of staff and family members who may be under stress and/or duress. The PST will have the assistance of qualified professionals.

The CRPD recognizes that certain incidents to which department members respond to may have profound physical and psychological effects on such personnel, and that critical incident stress may have a negative impact on department personnel and their families. In many cases this stress can be effectively addressed or minimized through a variety of resources. The leadership within this department has recognized the need to establish a program in order to deal with the stress of emergency responses.

The CRPD’s PST provides peer-based intervention and stress management education. The goal is to assist our peers with stressors caused by professional and/or personal events and preventing the long-term impact caused by traumatic stress. The highest priority of the team is confidentiality and respect for the feelings of the individuals involved. The team is in no way to act as or replace on-going professional counseling, it is a resource which provides stress management education and immediate crisis intervention.

Related Team Goals
- Provide critical incident stress management and educational support in order to assist in maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for all employees.
- Promote job retention, personnel morale and teamwork within the CRPD and throughout the City of Cedar Rapids.

PROCEDURE:
The activation of the team will be initiated by the Chief of Police or his designee during an incident or may be requested during a period following the critical exposures. All requests will be made by radio, e-mail, or phone to team leaders who then will activate the team through established procedures. Once activated for an incident, two team members will respond to the incident to observe and be the eyes and ears for the incident commander if so requested. Arrangements will be made for department personnel debriefing within 72 hours of the incident termination, if so needed.

When requested after an incident, the team coordinator will call the requesting person to arrange for the time and place of the debriefing activity.
**Policy Title:** Peer Support Team (PST)

**Standard/Ref #:** 22.2.3; 22.2.4

**Approved By:** Wayne Jerman, Chief

**Reviewed Date:** 5/7/2018

**Revised Date:** 5/7/2018

**When to Activate the PST:**
The PST may be beneficial in or following the types of incidents listed below and should be activated when CRPD personnel are involved in any of the incidents below:

- Serious injury or death of a CRPD member at, or en route to, an incident scene
- Mass Casualty Incident
- Suicide of CRPD member
- Serious injury or death of a civilian resulting from CRPD operations
- Serious injury or death of infants
- Death of and/or violence to a child
- Loss of life following extraordinary and prolonged expenditures of physical and emotional energy during rescue efforts
- An unusual incident that could trigger a profound emotional reaction
- Events in which the victim is known to the personnel
- Events with excessive media interest
- Events that are prolonged and end with a negative outcome
- Any significantly powerful, overwhelming distressing event
- Incidents in which the circumstances are so unusual or sights, smells, and sounds so distressing as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction that surpass the normal coping mechanisms of police personnel.
- Any difficult life circumstances of CRPD, staff, and family members such as death, disease, divorce, economic loss, property loss, etc.

In special cases, the department may request consultation with the support team following incidents that were not originally categorized as critical at the time they occurred.

**Optional Activation by Others**
Any other member of the CRPD, or the member/significant other, may call for guidance if a member is in distress.

**Other Services Provided by the PST**
PST members are also available to:

- Provide on-site consultation
- Advise the Incident Commander of factors related to stress
- Note and assist personnel with acute stress reactions
- Provide support to victims, personnel and the family members of affected personnel.
TEAM ADMINISTRATION
The CRPD PST will operate under the guidance of the Chief of Police. The team’s administrative duties and functions will be overseen by the PST Coordinator. The team may also be assisted by members of the Cedar Rapids Public Safety Chaplain Program.

LEVELS OF ACTIVATION
Level 1 – If any of the response calls show signs or symptoms of traumatic intervention members of the PST assigned to the incident will follow up with phone calls or in person to affected first responders who were on scene.

Level 2 – If the incident dictates, PST will be sent directly to the scene of an incident.

Level 3 – If a response call has traumatic effect on first responders a group debriefing will be offered and guided by the PST.

WHAT TO EXPECT
Every traumatic event is unique and different and the type of intervention used depends on the situation, the number of people involved, and their proximity to the event. The optimum is a three-step approach that addresses the trauma at various stages of progression: defusing, debriefing, and individual follow-up.

DEFUSING
Defusing’s are limited only to individuals directly involved in the incident and are often done informally, sometimes at the scene. They are designed to assist individuals in coping in the short term and address immediate needs. A defusing is done the day of the incident before the person(s) has a chance to sleep. The defusing is designed to assure the person or people involved that their feelings are normal, to tell them what symptoms to watch for over the short term, and to offer them a contact number where they can reach someone whom they can talk to.

DEBRIEFING
A debriefing is normally done within 72 hours of the incident and gives the individual or group the opportunity to talk about their experience, how it has affected them, brainstorm coping mechanisms, identify individuals at risk, and inform the individual or group about services available to them in their community.

Debriefings are usually the second level of intervention for those directly affected by the incident.
The debriefing process (defined by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation [ICISF]) has seven steps:

1) Introduction of intervener and establishment of guidelines and invites participants to introduce themselves (while attendance at a debriefing may be mandatory, participation is not);
2) Details of the event given from individual perspectives;
3) Emotional responses given subjectively;
4) Personal reaction and actions;
5) Followed again by a discussion of symptoms exhibited since the event; instruction phase where the team discusses the symptoms and assures participants that any symptoms (if they have any at all) are a normal reaction to an abnormal event and "generally" these symptoms will diminish with time and self-care;
6) Following a brief period of shared informal discussion resumption of duty where individuals are returned to their normal tasks.
7) The intervener is always watching for individuals who are not coping well and additional assistance is offered at the conclusion of the process.

**FOLLOW-UP**
The final step is to follow up with them after the debriefing to ensure that they are safe and coping well or to refer the individual for professional counselling. This is generally done within the week following the debriefing by team members as a check-in.

**COST OF SERVICE**
Members of the CRPD serve voluntarily as PST members. There are no charges for their services. Qualified professionals supporting the team charge hourly consulting fees for training and consultations. CRPD is supporting the training costs of the team. Charges for professional consultations required as the result of incident debriefings will be negotiated between the professionals and the CRPD.