



To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

April 4, 2023

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SUBJECT: ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO OFFICERS AFTER CRITICAL POLICE INCIDENTS AND OTHER TRAUMATIC EVENTS

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide information about forms of assistance available to officers after Critical Police Incidents (CPIs) and other traumatic events. The Fort Worth Police Department started collecting data about first-responder trauma incidents in late 2020, when one such incident was recorded. In 2021, 35 officers were reported to have been exposed to significant events. In 2022, 33 officers were reported to have been exposed to significant events.

In 2020, five officers experienced events warranting crisis intervention for suicide prevention, six officers in 2021, and three officers in 2022. In these instances, the Fort Worth Crisis Intervention Team responded and provided the necessary assistance by connecting these officers to appropriate resources. The City Council recently allocated Asset Forfeiture funds for officer mental health and wellness. These funds will be used to provide financial assistance for certain treatment programs, mainly substance abuse and crisis intervention in-patient programs.

Applicable Fort Worth Police General Orders

Four general orders are applicable to these situations.

- General Order 354.06 (B)(2): "Personnel involved in high-stress situations will be interviewed by their supervisor as soon as possible. Individuals who appear to be suffering post-incident trauma will be referred to the Peer Support Unit or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for appropriate counseling."
- General Order 412.04 (A), (B), and (E): Part of the Crisis Intervention Team's (CIT) mission is "to support the welfare of our officers and their families, encourage the existence of an internally supportive and resilient workforce, and make resources available to officers allowing them to overcome the challenges and stressors unique to law enforcement." Furthermore, "All information related to services provided to officers shall be maintained as confidential pursuant to Texas Health and Safety Code Sec 784.001." At any time, if an officer exhibits signs of behavioral health concern, or "Any indicators that an officer is in need of immediate intervention to protect the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others," any officer or supervisor may make referral to the Crisis Intervention Team lieutenant.
- General Order 413.01 (A)(4): "Peer Support personnel are beneficial to coworkers because they come from their homogenous group; therefore, giving them credibility that no academic training program can create. Peer Support members are not counselors or therapists, but are specially-trained colleagues who volunteer their time to provide intervention and assistance to police department employees involved in traumatic incidents and in times of personal and/or professional crisis." "Conversations with Peer Support members are not protected by legal privilege; however, communication with Peer Support members and employees are confidential through Police Department mandated policy..." unless an officer is a danger to self or others, suspected of child abuse, committed a narcotics offense, committed a domestic violence offense, committed elderly abuse, or committed a felony or a serious misdemeanor.
- General Order 413.01 (B): The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is the system of training for peer support officers. "Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) has become the standard model for addressing Critical Incident stress among first responders. CISM is a comprehensive, systematic and multicomponent approach for the reduction and mitigation of the harmful aspects of traumatic stress in the aftermath of major incidents, disasters or catastrophes."

Procedures for Officers Who are Exposed to Traumatic Events

General Orders 421.05 and 421.06 detail the actual response to officers involved in a significant or traumatic event, which is defined as "an incident that could result in exposure to severe physical or emotional stress." "The Department's goal is to provide the employee with assistance from a mental health professional so the employee can learn needed coping mechanisms to effectively process the incident, while simultaneously reporting the event so that there is no delay in provided treatment through the Worker's Compensation program." Below are some of the steps in the process after a Critical Police Incident has occurred:

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- The on-call Crisis Intervention officer and the Peer Report Coordinator will be contacted after a Critical Police Incident and at least one of them will make the scene of the incident.
- A member of the Crisis Intervention Team will meet with the involved officers at Major Case to ensure that the proper paperwork is initiated (DWC1 – First Report of Injury) and the EAP referral. The Crisis Intervention Team will also schedule a debrief within five (5) to seven (7) days, along with Peer Support and other counselors, to work towards normalizing the feelings or anxiety created by the event.
- Following the Critical Police Incident, the involved officer will be placed on Significant Event Leave.
 - Significant Event Leave is a designation of paid reprieve from regular duties for three (3) workdays after the Significant Event/Incident. This required leave will commence on the employee's first regularly scheduled shift after the incident.
 - During the initial three (3) days of Significant Event Leave or immediately following, if the Significant Event Coordinator or the Significant Event Liaison determine it is in the employee's best interest, they may order the employee to attend the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) hosted by the Peer Support Team. This is group therapy, scheduled no later than five to seven (5-7) days after the event.
 - Since the maximum amount of Significant Event Leave allowed is five (5) days, the leave may be extended two (2) additional days.
- The Police Department also encourages the family of the officer(s) to take advantage of the free (limited) counseling and support services through *Resources for Living*.
- The Significant Event Coordinator will determine the best option and resources to utilize to best address the employee's needs.
- Immediately following the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, the Liaison will meet with the affected officer and ensure the employee has contacted the EAP Manager to schedule an appointment with a licensed counselor. Although the appointment with a licensed counselor is mandatory prior to returning to work, the session is not a fitness for duty evaluation. It is solely intended to ensure the officer is coping with the event in a healthy manner and to provide tools for the officer's recovery.
- If needed, officers are allowed to work for a period of time in an alternative assignment. This allows the officer time to transition back to their assignment after the traumatic event.

Peer Support

The Peer Support team is a group of trained volunteers who provide support to officers experiencing either professional or personal crisis. All Peer Team members are trained in assisting officers with individual and group crisis intervention. During a traumatic incident, a peer support member will make the scene to help the officer with physical needs, offer help on how to process the incident, and explain what to expect next. Officers will also be given an opportunity to do a group or personal debrief a few days later, in conjunction with the Crisis Intervention Team, to ensure that they are processing the incident properly, both mentally and emotionally. Peer Support officers will follow up with the officer a few days later to check on their well-being.

Officers are exposed to traumatic events throughout their careers and their mental health is one of our top priorities. Our goal is to provide resources proactively so as to address the trauma and minimize the accompanying stress while officers are processing their exposure to critical incidents. Additionally, it is just as important that we take steps to reduce the stigma associated with officers asking for and needing help to cope with stress.

If you have any questions about this information, please contact Captain Antione Williams at antione.williams@fortworthtexas.gov.

David Cooke
City Manager