



**Special Order**

BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

DATE ISSUED: January 23, 2026	DATE EFFECTIVE: January 23, 2026	NUMBER: SO26-003	PAGE: 1 of 8
TO: Distribution "A"			RETENTION DATE: Until Rescinded
SUBJECT: <b>Manual Revision – 3-503 Peer Support</b>			APPROVED BY: <i>Chief O'Hara</i>

MP-8806

**Summary:** This policy was added to outline how to access the MPD Peer Support Team (PST), as well as the structure, roles, privacy standards, and procedures for the PST, which provides voluntary wellness support to MPD members.

Effective with the issuance of this Special Order, section 3-503 of the MPD Policy and Procedure Manual shall be added as follows:

**3-503 Peer Support**  
(01/23/26)

**I. Summary**

This policy outlines how to access the MPD Peer Support Team (PST), as well as the structure, roles, privacy standards, and procedures for the PST, which provides voluntary wellness support to MPD members.

**II. Purpose**

The Peer Support Team (PST) is committed to promoting the resiliency of MPD by educating, supporting, and assisting members in strategies that promote overall health and wellness. The goal is to enable stability and longevity in member's personal and professional lives.

The PST aims to help MPD members through stress-related incidents, to collectively work together to create a culture of wellness, and to promote self-awareness and proactive wellness strategies.

**III. Policy**

A. It is the policy of the PST, in accordance with MN Statute section 181.9731, to provide safe, non-judgmental, and privileged assistance to all MPD members that seek it.

- B. The PST provides help with mental health skills and strategies and psychological stress or trauma, such as traumatic events, critical incidents, illness, loss, grief, and substance use concerns.
- C. Member involvement with the PST is strictly voluntary.
- D. The PST does not replace psychological treatment but can facilitate pathways to professional help utilizing MPD's Health and Wellness offerings and the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- E. Efforts shall be made to build and maintain a PST that reflects the diversity of MPD.
- F. The PST shall not be used as an investigative tool, disciplinary measure, or be otherwise involved in any on-going investigations.
- G. No PST member shall have involvement with Fitness For Duty evaluations for MPD.
- H. A supervisor or member may request the PST to respond to any situation that may have an adverse impact on affected personnel.
- I. The PST participates in MPD's comprehensive response to critical and traumatic incidents, per P&P 3-502 and P&P 7-810.
- J. When responding as a PST member to an incident, they shall avoid direct involvement in the incident and focus on assisting the involved member.
- K. PST members who are directly involved in an incident shall not provide support related to that incident.

#### IV. Accessing Peer Support Team Resources

All members shall have timely access to a trained and trusted member of the PST.

##### A. General

1. PST members are available to all members of MPD without having to request permission to contact and receive support.
2. A current list of all active PST members and their contact information will be maintained by the PST Coordinator and made available to all MPD members through MPD's Wellness Page and MPD's Wellness App.
3. PST members shall be allowed to offer support to peers while on duty.

##### B. Initial Peer Support Contact

MPD's Wellness Center main phone line (612-673-6161) connects to the PST Coordinator. A confidential message can be left and the Coordinator will reply within 24 hours.

1. Members may contact a PST member directly or be connected to a PST member through the Wellness Center.
2. Peer support may be conducted in whatever format the member seeking support is comfortable with (ex. phone, FaceTime, in-person, text, etc.)
3. PST members shall continually work to establish rapport, assess the peer support seeker's needs, and provide appropriate support or referrals.
4. Efforts shall be made by the PST Coordinator to accommodate requests for specific PST members.
5. The PST Coordinator will assign a PST member based on their capacity, rank, and fit with MPD member seeking support.
6. Within two weeks of a critical incident, each involved member shall be contacted by a PST member by phone, text, in-person, or virtual to complete a check-in.

## V. Peer Support Roles

MPD's PST consists of volunteer members, sworn and civilian, selected on their ability to maintain privacy, empathy, and active listening skills. The team represents a diverse range of ranks, units, and experiences within the department.

### A. Peer Support Team Coordinator

The PST Coordinator is a sworn full-time position within Health and Wellness and is the lead of the PST.

The PST Coordinator is responsible for:

- The member selection process.
- Ensuring training requirements are met.
- PST deployment.
- Overall PST program operations.
- Ensuring policy compliance.
- Managing internal and external peer support resources.
- Regularly evaluating the team's effectiveness and procedures.

The Chief of Police, in consultation with the Health and Wellness Director, shall appoint a trained PST Coordinator as a part of Health and Wellness. The PST Coordinator will report to the Director of Health and Wellness.

### B. Health and Wellness Coordinator

The Health and Wellness Coordinator will work in collaboration with the PST Coordinator to streamline PST operations when needed. These include:

- Providing ongoing support for the PST.

- Working with the PST Coordinator to ensure the success of the PST.
- Coordinate support services during traumatic and significant event responses.
- Assist with the marketing and advocating of the PST throughout MPD.
- Connect MPD members to PST members.

### **C. Peer Support Team Clinical Lead**

The PST Clinical Lead is responsible for providing professional mental health expertise, oversight, and support to ensure the effectiveness of the PST.

The PST clinical lead shall report to the Director of Health and Wellness.

1. The PST Clinical Lead shall be a licensed mental health professional responsible for:
  - Program oversight and development.
  - Ongoing training and team development.
  - Providing direct mental health services to PST members, as needed.
  - Attending and leading PST Meetings.
  - Continuously assessing the mental wellness of PST members.
  - Conducting annual wellness check-ins of PST members.
  - Providing consultation, debriefing, and referrals of other services to PST members.
  - Intervening when a peer support situation requires escalation to clinical care.

### **D. Peer Support Team Member**

A PST member may be a civilian or sworn member of MPD who is specially trained in standards that are established by an accredited mental health organization to provide day-to-day emotional support for MPD members.

1. A PST member participates in the Department's comprehensive response to incidents as designated in MN Statute section 181.9731, P&P 3-502, and P&P 7-810.
2. PST members shall refer MPD members that require professional intervention or support beyond their scope of training to a licensed mental health professional or alternative resources to help meet the needs of the MPD member.
3. General responsibilities include:
  - Attend training to maintain certification.
  - Provide one-on-one support to peers.
  - Safeguard the trust of those seeking peer support.
  - Connect peers to professional resources as needed.
  - Assist Health and Wellness with group incident support as needed.
  - Communicate and work effectively with other PST members as needed.

## VI. Interaction Disclosures

Discretion is a cornerstone of the PST program. Information shared with a PST member during a supportive interaction is considered part of a privileged relationship, like attorney and client, doctor and patient, or priest and penitent.

### A. Statutory Protections

1. Information obtained through the peer support process is protected from disclosure to third parties by MN Statute section 181.9731. Government data on individuals receiving peer support counseling is classified as private data on individuals under MN Statute section 13.43 Subd. 9.
2. Outside exceptions listed in MN Statute section 181.9731, subd. 4, information is not subject to be disclosed by PST members, even at the request of police department administration, supervisors, or fellow PST members.

### B. Disclosure Requirements and Limitations

1. Prior to providing support, the PST member shall inform the member receiving support of the limits on what may be disclosed from their interactions, which includes:
  - Information disclosed that is required to be reported per MN Statute chapter 260E or MN Statute section 626.557 which includes, but is not limited to, reasonable suspicion of minor or vulnerable adult maltreatment.
  - A clear substantial risk of imminent, serious physical injury or death to self or others.
  - The member receiving support provides written consent authorizing disclosure of information.
  - The member receiving support voluntarily testified, in which case the peer support counselor may be compelled to testify on the same subject.
2. Information disclosed shall only include the necessary amount to prevent harm, as authorized by the recipient of PST resources, or legally compelled to.
3. PST members shall make the report directly to the assigned PST Clinical Lead.
  - a. In cases where a question regarding disclosure requirements arise, the PST member shall immediately contact the PST Coordinator or PST Clinical Lead who shall advise the PST member and take the appropriate action.
4. The PST Coordinator shall educate supervisors on the circumstances requiring disclosure and privileged interaction guidelines of the PST as established by MPD and MN Statutes.

### C. Records and Agreements

1. PST members shall not keep records of support, whether written, recorded, formal or informal, other than non-identifying numerical records to document the utilization of the program (such as number of contacts).

2. A PST member shall sign an agreement indicating their commitment to maintain privacy as outlined in this policy and statute.
  - a. If a PST member is found to have breached a member's privacy or privileged interactions, they shall be immediately dismissed from the team and may be subject to discipline.

## VII. PST Member Application, Selection, and Requirements

MPD members who have applied for secondary assignment, meet the minimum requirements, and are selected, must complete the state mandated training, further evaluation by the PST leads, and a post-training interview before an offer to join the PST may be provided to the applicant to the applicant.

### A. Qualifications

Members must possess the following minimum requirements to be eligible to serve on the PST:

- Be an active MPD sworn or civilian member with a minimum of two years of employment.
- A performance history that reflects and supports the values of an effective PST member.
- Completed probation and be in good standing with the Department.
- No disciplinary actions or open complaints that would indicate a member is unfit to serve on the PST.
- Demonstrated ability to be a positive role model.
- Ability to uphold all privacy requirements and discretion.
- Ability to respond to service requests when requested and available.
- Ability to communicate effectively with others.
- Demonstrate the ability to be an advocate for mental wellness.
- Demonstrate effectiveness in peer support defusing events.

### B. Application Steps

To appropriately evaluate an applicant's ability to perform the duties necessary, they shall be actively engaged, honest, objective, and fair throughout the process.

#### 1. PST applicants shall:

- Provide letters of recommendation from two coworkers and one supervisor.
  - Provide a letter of interest detailing their qualifications and attributes.
  - Participate in a preliminary interview with the PST Coordinator, PST Clinical Lead, and 1-2 PST Members.
  - After preliminary selection, successfully complete the required peer support training.
- a. The following may be grounds for rejection:

- Evidence of past unauthorized disclosure.
- Insufficient display or required skills during training.
- The PST Coordinator and PST Clinical Lead may, at their discretion, identify other grounds for rejection.

b. Acceptance to the PST shall be dependent upon the satisfactory completion of:

- A review of the applicant's discipline record and open complaints.
- An impartial and objective interview.
- Completing training.
- Post-training interview to confirm the applicant's capabilities.

c. Each applicant shall be provided with an acceptance or rejection letter to the PST.

### **C. Training and Professional Development**

1. All members of the PST are required to undergo MN State mandated training in peer support.
2. Training and professional development will be offered on an ongoing basis, to ensure PST Members are equipped to effectively fulfill their roles.
3. Members shall demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional development and training related to peer support. They shall seek additional guidance when necessary.
4. The PST Clinical Lead shall ensure PST members are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to complete the job, on an ongoing basis.

### **D. PST Membership Revocation**

Any PST member that violates this policy or applicable state statute, should expect removal from the PST and may be subject to discipline.

1. Criteria for removal include, but are not limited to:

- Non-compliance with any portion of this policy.
- Unauthorized disclosure of information.
- Inappropriate behavior as defined and decided by a ranking PST member.
- Results of disciplinary action that deem the member unfit for providing peer support.
- Repeated failure to be readily available for defusing or critical incident deployments.
- Repeated lack of responsiveness to member requests for support or availability for defusing or critical incident deployments.
- Failure to communicate and collaborate effectively with other PST members, Coordinator, or Clinical Lead.

2. To help prevent burnout and support the mental well-being of PST members, any member who needs to reduce their support load, must notify the PST Coordinator to develop a plan that prioritizes their health and continued effectiveness.

### **VIII. Definitions**

**Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM):** A standardized approach using a discussion format to provide education, support, and emotional release opportunities for members potentially affected by work- related critical incidents.

**Peer Support:** Mental and emotional wellness support provided by peers trained to help members cope with incidents and certain personal or professional stressors.

**Peer Support Defusing:** A brief, informal, and supportive conversation held shortly after a stressful or traumatic event, involving people who experienced the event and a Peer Support Team (PST) member. A defusing is intended to: mitigate the impact of the critical or traumatic incident, reduce cognitive, emotional, and physiological symptoms, and assess the need for debriefings and other resources. Unlike a formal debriefing, defusing is short-term, typically held within hours of the incident, and focuses on immediate coping rather than in-depth discussion or analysis.

**Privileged:** A protected exchange or communication between people that cannot be disclosed, unless specific exceptions apply.