

TITLE	POLICY NUMBER	
Workforce Resilience – Peer Support Program	DCS 01-05	
RESPONSIBLE AREA	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISION
Field Operations	December 10, 2018	2

I. POLICY STATEMENT

Child welfare workers often experience secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue. If unresolved, these conditions may contribute to cumulative stress and burnout, which compromise an employee’s ability to engage with clients in a helpful and productive way. Additionally, stressful aspects from an employee’s personal life may have the same impact. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program is available as a resource to enhance an employee’s ability to navigate through workplace and personal stress to improve employee well-being.

II. AUTHORITY

[A.R.S. 8-453](#) Powers and duties

III. DEFINITIONS

Burnout: Prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job which consists of three components: exhaustion, depersonalization (defined as: disengagement or detachment from the world) and diminished feelings of self-efficacy in the workplace (Meichenbaum, D., [Self-Care for Trauma Psychotherapists and Caregivers: Individual, Social and Organizational Interventions](#), University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada).

Critical incident: An event that is unusually challenging, has the potential to create significant human distress, and can overwhelm one’s usual coping mechanisms.

Compassion fatigue: The physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time.

Cumulative stress: Stress that builds over time, upon previous incidents of unresolved stress, and may reduce one's ability to be resilient and productive.

High profile incident: An event which attracts attention or publicity; it may include cases involving a fatality or near fatality.

Peer Support Response: The supportive response to a Department employee who experienced an incident, or a combination of incidents, of work-related or personal stress. The responder is a Department volunteer Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member who has experienced similar incidents, or combination of incidents, of work-related or personal stress, and who has received specialized training in peer support.

Pre-Incident Training: Training that occurs outside of a critical incident that prepares the employee to better identify critical incidents, secondary traumatic stress, cumulative stress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization if it happens to them. With an enhanced ability to identify the issue, employees are more likely to use the resources available to resolve the stressor.

Secondary traumatic stress: The emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another ([The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)).

Vicarious traumatization: The cumulative transformation in the inner experience of the child welfare worker that comes about as a result of empathetic engagement with the client's traumatic experiences.

IV. POLICY

A. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator is an employee, or employees, appointed by the Department Deputy Director of Field Operations, or designee, to coordinate and administer the activities and training of Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program services. The Program Coordinator or

designee:

- a. facilitates the application and selection process of Workforce Resilience - Peer Support team members;
- b. facilitates ongoing training and development of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support team members;
- c. coordinates a Peer Support Response to an individual Department employee in circumstances where response criteria are met (see Procedures, section V.C);
- d. facilitates responses where multiple Workforce Resilience - Peer Support team members respond to an incident impacting a group of people such as a section or region;
- e. facilitates department-wide Pre-Incident Training;
- f. confers with the Deputy Director of Field Operations or designee;
- g. confers with the Office of Budget, Office of Accounting, Field Resources and Policy Unit, Procurement and Contracts, and Learning and Development to develop and maintain program operation;
- h. confers with trainers or consultants that are not Department employees;
- i. debriefs with Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members both individually and as a group; and
- j. serves as a member of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team who also provides Peer Support Responses.

2. Consultants

A consultant can be a person from outside of the Department who contracts with the agency, or a Department employee who is a member of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team.

- a. Consultants should have extensive experience in peer support issues and have a minimum of a master's degree with an emphasis in psychology and/or counseling.

- b. Consultants must be able to assess and identify acute symptoms of stress and be familiar with the referral process of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other mental health community resources.
- c. Consultants will be involved in the Pre-Incident Training portion of the program either by consulting and reviewing content or through in-person training sessions with Department groups (section meetings, leadership conferences, etc.).
- d. Consultants will assist with mentoring members of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team, who are actively providing interventions to the Department, through planned and incident-based (urgent) sessions.

3. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team Lead

The Team Lead is an employee or employees selected by the Program Coordinator who serves as a liaison between the Program Coordinator and the local Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team. The Team Lead may fulfill duties c, d, & i listed in the **Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program Coordinator** section above. The Team Lead is also responsible for fulfilling the duties outlined in the **Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team** section below.

4. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team

- a. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team consists of DCS employee volunteers who receive specialized training in secondary traumatic stress (STS), vicarious traumatization (VT), cumulative stress (CS), burnout (BO), and responding to highly stressful incidents, also known as a critical incidents (CI), and personal stressors. While external trainers may be used, this training is coordinated and provided by the Department. An important element of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support service is the team member's ability to relate to the individuals experiencing work-related stress, as such members have similar experiences of their own. Although Workforce Resilience - Peer Support team members may not have personal experience with each of the personal matters for which they offer support, they must have the ability to be empathetic and reflective with the employee seeking

support.

- b. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team's primary responsibilities include responding to requests for peer support to address STS, VT, CS, BO, or CI by providing individual and/or group supportive interventions, disseminating resource information and referrals for professional services, and providing pre-incident preparation and training.
- c. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members will be selected from a variety of geographic locations throughout the state and from a variety of job titles, making the team as representative of the Department as possible.

B. Membership Eligibility

- 1. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team Members must be able to demonstrate the following:
 - a. respect and trust of peers;
 - b. ability to keep confidences (see subsection D, "Confidentiality");
 - c. ability to listen and communicate effectively;
 - d. empathy;
 - e. sensitivity to others;
 - f. adaptability.
- 2. Applicants must maintain a "meets standards" or higher performance evaluation.
- 3. Applicants must attest that they have no formal disciplinary issues within the last two years, and are not the subject of an ongoing disciplinary investigation. The Program Coordinator will verify the absence of performance issues with the applicant's direct supervisor and the Human Resources Employee Relations team.
- 4. Team members must serve for a minimum period of one year. Any team member wishing to withdraw from the program for any reason should discuss the matter with the Program Coordinator and submit his/her

resignation in writing.

5. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support team members must be available for training. Continuing education will be provided at Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team meetings. Members will be asked to present topics of interest identified by the group. Members are encouraged to participate in other available stress and peer support workshops and seminars.

C. Revocation of Membership

1. Membership is revocable at the discretion of the Program Coordinator. Revocation is applicable for, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. organizing, or in any way attempting to organize, a group intervention without the Program Coordinator's prior knowledge and approval;
 - b. failure to be present, without good cause, at an assigned intervention or at a scheduled educational or in-service presentation when the member has made a commitment to do so;
 - c. any misrepresentation that may cause the integrity of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team to come into question;
 - d. having more than one unexcused Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team meeting absence or failing to complete training;
 - e. acting against the expressed direction of the Program Coordinator, team leader, Consultant and/or mental health professional;
 - f. violating confidentiality (see subsection D, "Confidentiality");
 - g. failing to follow protocols and procedures regarding team activity;
 - h. receiving an Annual Performance Evaluation below a "Meets Standards";
 - i. involvement in formal disciplinary action.

D. Confidentiality

1. Confidentiality shall be maintained to protect the identity of employees as

well as the content of any contact between an employee and a member of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team. Team members may discuss situations with other team members, but the names of peer support recipients will not be shared, nor will the content of their interactions with employees be shared with anyone outside of the team. All conversations will be held in a professional and respectful manner; the purpose of these discussions is to improve team members' skillsets and to provide an opportunity for team members to process their work.

2. The rights and privacy of employees will be safeguarded to the maximum extent possible, balanced with the Department's compelling interest in maintaining a safe and productive workplace and workforce. **There are some situations when confidentiality cannot be absolute.** While every effort will be made to protect confidentiality, the gravity of some situations will demand attention by management. These include:
 - a. situations in which there is an indication the employee presents a clear and present danger to himself/herself or others;
 - b. situations in which it appears there is a violation of any law that would normally be enforced by law enforcement including, but not limited to, child abuse, sex abuse, domestic violence, etc.;
 - c. situations in which it appears there is a concern for the safety of a client or some other party.
3. During an intervention, if an employee begins to describe any of the circumstances listed in 2 a.-c. above, the Peer Support Team member will inform the employee that confidentiality cannot be maintained.
4. Breaching a confidence is considered a violation of Department policy. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members who violate confidentiality of an employee, when the circumstances described in 2 a.-c. do not exist, may be subject to investigation, disciplinary action, and removal from the team.

V. PROCEDURES

- A. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team Application and Selection Process
 1. A request for new applicants will be sent annually. Recruitment efforts

may occur at other times throughout the year depending on team vacancies. To apply, an employee must submit a completed [application form](#) to WorkforceResiliencePeerSupport@azdcs.gov.

2. The applicant's direct supervisor and the next manager in the chain of command must approve the applicant's participation on the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team. The Program Coordinator will contact the applicant's direct supervisor and the next manager in the chain of command to verify approval. The applicant is encouraged to discuss and seek support from the direct supervisor and the next manager in the chain of command prior to application.
3. The Program Coordinator will provide the [Program Member Commitment](#) to the applicant for review and signature. This document will be stored by the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program Coordinator in accordance with the applicable statutory authority.
4. The Program Coordinator will schedule the applicant for a panel interview.
5. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support interview panel chooses the members from the pool of interviewed candidates based on the membership requirements outlined below. The Program Coordinator shall notify the applicant of his or her selection status.
6. Prior to the conclusion of each membership year, the Program Coordinator will evaluate current membership. If current members choose to remain on the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team, those members must sign a [Program Member Commitment](#) for another one-year period and may remain on the team with the approval of the Program Coordinator, direct supervisor, and the manager above the supervisor in the chain of command.

B. Peer Support Responses

1. The recipient of the peer support response will determine how they are most comfortable receiving the response and may receive it in the following ways:
 - a. in person, in a neutral location (off-site);
 - b. in person, in the office;
 - c. telephonically;

- d. anonymously by phone; or
 - e. via TEAMS.
2. The goals are to help reduce stress, manage crises, and provide immediate short-term assistance.
 3. A Peer Support Response should be considered a type of psychological first aid appropriate during times of high stress; it is NOT a form of psychological counseling, nor should it be viewed as a substitute for mental health services.
 4. Upon Peer Support Response, the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member will provide additional resources and referrals to aide in recovery if necessary.
 5. While the employee requesting the supportive response may need to provide general information to the supervisor for assurance of employee safety, detailed information need not be provided in order to protect the employee's confidentiality and privacy.
 6. An employee is permitted to receive a Peer Support Response during their work shift. An employee may also receive a Peer Support Response after business hours or during a break.
 - a. If an employee chooses to receive a Peer Support Response at a neutral location (i.e. coffee shop, park, or otherwise), the response should not last for more than one hour. If the employee needs further assistance from the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member, additional sessions can be scheduled in the near future.
 - b. Employees who receive a Peer Support Response and the Workforce Resilience Team member(s) providing the response must follow the Overtime Pay Policy ([DCS 04-32](#)).

C. Response to a Critical Incident

The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team will outreach and offer to provide a Peer Support Response when there is a high-profile incident (fatality, near fatality, or media involvement) on an open ongoing DCS case, or a case that has been open in ongoing within the last year.

1. The Program Coordinator will determine to whom the response shall be provided, taking into consideration the length and capacity of the involvement with the family experiencing the high-profile incident.
2. The Program Coordinator will immediately alert the Workforce Resilience Team Lead of the need for a Peer Support Response in the team members' area.
3. The team member will contact the employee(s) impacted by the high-profile incident and offer a Peer Support Response. The outreach and coordination of the peer support activities should be treated with a moderate to high level of urgency.
4. The receipt of a Peer Support Response is always voluntary, and the employee may decline the receipt of a response.
 - a. If the employee declines the Peer Support Response, the team member shall follow up with the employee one week after the initial contact to check in and offer support.
 - b. If the employee again declines the Peer Support Response, the team shall not contact the employee further as it relates to the current incident.
5. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member may also provide a Peer Support Response to a group of employees who have been involved in or impacted by a critical incident.

D. Response to Other Significant Incidents

1. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team will outreach and offer to provide a Peer Support Response when made aware of a significant incident for which a Peer Support Response may be helpful.
2. All levels of management and frontline employees are encouraged to alert the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program Coordinator, by phone or through e-mail at WorkforceResiliencePeerSupport@AZDCS.gov, when a significant incident occurs. The Program Coordinator will evaluate whether a response is within the purview of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team, and if so, the Program Coordinator will facilitate a supportive response.

E. Response to a Self-Referral

1. Any Department employee may request a Peer Support Response to assist in coping with work-related stress (secondary traumatic stress, cumulative stress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization) or stress connected to personal or family matters.
 - a. The Department employee interested in the Peer Support Response may contact any of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members directly. Contact information may be found at: <https://azdcs.sharepoint.com/ERK28EWT/CZD74JWT/SitePages/Home.aspx>; or on the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support brochures.
 - b. The Department employee interested in receiving a Peer Support Response may also contact the Program Coordinator via phone or e-mail (WorkforceResiliencePeerSupport@AZDCS.gov), and request that the Program Coordinator assist with coordinating a Peer Support Response.
 - c. The Program Coordinator will identify the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support team member best suited to provide the response.
 - d. The Program Coordinator will reach out to the Workforce Resilience Team Lead and provide a brief summary of the circumstance. The Workforce Resilience Team Lead will reach out to a mentor in the appropriate area to make the response.
 - e. The team member shall contact and provide the Peer Support Response with a moderate to high level of urgency.
2. Leaders shall ensure employees are aware of how to request a Peer Support Response particularly when the leader is aware of employee involvement in a case-related circumstance or personal matter that has potential to elicit a stress response. Such circumstances *may* include, but *are not limited to*:
 - a. child, parent, or caregiver fatality;
 - b. high profile case/investigation;
 - c. death of a co-worker;

- d. threats against a building;
- e. removal of children;
- f. termination of parental rights;
- g. contentious court hearings/trials;
- h. attending an autopsy;
- i. death of an employee's family member;
- j. witnessing the suffering of a child or others;
- k. dealing with a hostile or threatening client;
- l. being stalked by a client;
- m. goodbye visit; and/or
- n. any other case-related or personal matter that is causing the employee distress.

F. Pre-Crisis Preparation and Training

- 1. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team will also respond to requests for education and training on stress and crisis management. The overall goals are to strengthen psychological resistance (immunity to stress), enhance resiliency (rebound from crisis), and accelerate recovery should an employee ever experience a critical incident.
- 2. All education or training materials and presentations shall be approved by the Program Coordinator to ensure fidelity to program messaging.

G. Additional Responsibilities of Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team Members

- 1. Training
 - a. The team members shall participate in specialized training on trauma exposure, stress management, and peer support. The Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program Coordinator facilitates this training with an internal or external accredited professional(s).

- b. The team members may also participate in external trainings and activities within the statewide peer support community, as approved by the Program Coordinator, to enhance knowledge and skills for responding as a peer support team member.

2. Team Meetings

- a. The Program Coordinator and the Workforce Resilience Team Lead will organize team meetings, with each region, which includes OCWI and the Hotline, on a quarterly basis.
- b. The Program Coordinator and the Workforce Resilience Team Lead will serve as a liaison between the regional teams.
- c. Each Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member shall not have more than one unexcused absence from team meetings per one year of member commitment.
- d. More than one unexcused absence, per one year of member commitment, can be grounds for revocation of membership.

3. Tracking Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team Member Activity

- a. To protect confidentiality of Peer Support recipients, no identifying information is documented.
- b. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members will track all Peer Support Responses on the Outreach Tracking Log once outreach is complete.
- c. The Program Coordinator and the Workforce Resilience Team Lead will track each outreach assigned to Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members for each calendar month on the Program Coordinator Outreach Tracking Log.
- d. The Program Coordinator and the Workforce Resilience Team Lead will track each outreach assigned to Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team members for each calendar month on the Program Coordinator Outreach Tracking Log.

H. Revocation of a Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team Member

- 1. Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team membership may be revoked

for any of the reasons outlined in Section IV of the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Program Policy under the “Revocation of Membership” heading.

- a. Upon revocation of membership, the Program Coordinator will call and/or email to inform the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member that they are no longer able to serve on the team.
- b. The Program Coordinator will follow this phone call with a written notice via e-mail or hard copy.
- c. The Program Coordinator will inform the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member that, if an employee seeks them out for a Peer Support response, they must refer that employee to another team member or the Program Coordinator. They must refrain from any from negative discussion or slander about the Workforce Resilience Team as this may interfere with an employee receiving the assistance they require.
- d. The Program Coordinator will contact the Workforce Resilience - Peer Support Team member’s supervisor and inform them of the team member’s revocation of membership.
- e. The Program Coordinator will remove the individual’s name from the list of team members on the Workforce Resilience SharePoint page and from the Workforce Resilience brochures.

Informal and/or formal discipline up to dismissal may occur subsequent to a violation outlined in Section IV.C (Revocation of Membership) of this policy. The Program Coordinator will coordinate with the Employee Relations team in Human Resources to assist in determining an appropriate course of action.

VI. FORMS INDEX

[*Program Member Commitment \(DCS-1539\)*](#)

[*Workforce Resilience Team Application \(DCS-1538\)*](#)

[*Workforce Resilience Management Approval of Applicant \(DCS-1537\)*](#)