


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT		
Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Stress Management		AOM: P-152
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [22.2.6], [35.1.9.a,b&d], [35.1.9.e], [35.1.9.e&f], [1.3.8], [35.1.9.f], [35.1.8]		Issuing Authority <hr/> John D. Cartledge Chief of Police
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I. Introductory Discussion

The Northampton Police Department is committed to a program of stress management for its employees. The well-being of Department members is vitally important to the employees, their families, and the community they serve. To this end, the Department will offer professional assistance, training, peer counseling, and professional referrals.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Northampton Police Department to utilize professional psychological counseling and referrals for all employees, on both a voluntary and mandatory basis, for stress-induced issues and related behavior.

III. Confidentiality [22.2.6]

- A. It is critical for the success of this or any other employee assistance effort, that confidentiality of case information be maintained. Therefore, the Department shall ensure that information obtained from an employee remains confidential, *unless failure to disclose such information could cause a clear and present danger to the safety or security of an individual, the public, or the Department.*
- B. Psychological service providers have the same confidentiality privileges and prohibition on disclosures of information as licensed social workers. Peer Support Team members working in the capacity of this policy shall also have the same privilege and responsibility of confidentiality.

IV. Responsibilities

- A. Northampton Police Department supervisors, members, and co-workers have no greater obligation than to monitor and promote the well-being of employees. Supervisors should be conscious of symptoms related to internal or external stress of an employee.
- B. Behavior changes manifested by an individual in any of the following areas for example, should be considered as an indicator of potentially serious problems:
 - 1. Decreased Productivity
 - 2. Personality Changes
 - 3. Absenteeism
 - 4. Unusual behavior
 - 5. Suicidal tendencies
 - 6. Severe or minor medical problems
 - 7. Alcoholism or drug use
 - 8. Rude or discourteous behavior toward others
 - 9. Inappropriate display of anger
- C. Every supervisor or member of the Department upon noticing or becoming aware of unusual behavior patterns by any Department employee that would indicate stress-related problems shall immediately notify their immediate supervisor in writing. [35.1.8]
- D. Supervisors will be responsible for documenting the unusual behavior patterns and making appropriate recommendations to the Chief of Police.

V. Voluntary Participation [35.1.8]

- A. Employees are encouraged to seek professional consultation to alleviate stress-induced emotional problems or relationship problems where psychological services may be of assistance.
- B. The City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers free, confidential, and personal assistance to employees and their families in resolving problems that affect their personal lives and job performance.
- C. The Department will not request nor require the psychological services provider or other staff under their supervision, to furnish information that results from participation in the voluntary counseling program. All information arising out of voluntary participation is strictly confidential and privileged under law. However, this privilege does not apply if the employee displays a clear and immediate probability of committing bodily harm to themselves or others.
- D. In cases of voluntary participation, the psychological services provider may advise the Department of the contact, only when the affected employee has waived the privilege. The Department should not request information concerning the diagnosis or treatment of any voluntary participant, nor should the Department contact the provider to ascertain an employee's attendance or participation.
- E. At the request of an employee, information on contractual psychological services that are available to the employee will be made available.

VI. Mandatory Participation [35.1.8]

- A. The mandatory referral process is provided to assist the employee's supervisors in the resolution of significant performance problems.
- B. The mandatory referral process is also available to assist the employee involved in or exposed to, an unusual occurrence that in the opinion of the Chief of Police merits such referral.
 - 1. Further, any employee whose actions or use of force results in a death or serious injury, shall be removed from duty pending administrative review.
[1.1.8]
- C. If, in the opinion of the employee's supervisor, specific observable mood, cognitive or emotional behavioral, and performance concerns are evident, such as: depression, excessive use of sick time, severe personal problems, officer safety violations, and/or a significant decline in job performance exists, the affected employee may be advised of the services available such as the City's

Employee Assistance Program, and the employee should be urged to voluntarily participate.

- D. If the employee has not attended voluntary counseling, or when a supervisor becomes aware of a continuing significant performance or behavioral problem, the supervisor should contact their immediate supervisor for consultation concerning the use of a Mandatory Referral.
- E. The criteria for referral will be based solely upon observable and documented deficient or deteriorating job performance, questionable behavior, or exposure to, or involvement in, an unusual occurrence.
- F. Rumors, innuendoes, and subjective feelings are not a basis for referrals.
- G. In cases of Mandatory Referral, only the Chief of Police may verify that the employee attended the counseling. The provider may advise the Chief of Police of the counseling session's results only if the affected employee has waived the privilege.
- H. Information concerning the diagnosis or treatment of a Mandatory Referral participant should not be requested. In the event that the employee's participation is mandated, the employee is guaranteed Doctor/Client privilege of confidentiality.
- I. Supervisors should remain alert for continued job performance and behavioral problems and encourage the employee to maintain acceptable standards of performance.
- J. If, despite mandatory counseling, an employee's supervisor does not observe satisfactory improvement within a reasonable length of time, other administrative action must be considered.

VII. Peer Support Team [35.1.8]

- A. Employees may be sought to serve as volunteer members of a Peer Support Team.
- B. A Peer Support Team receives specialized training and guidance in the recognition of stress-related problems and the recommended response.
- C. Peer Support Team members provide information and personal guidance to fellow employees who may be experiencing stress-related problems.
- D. Peer Support Team members working in the capacity of this policy shall also have the same privilege and responsibility of confidentiality.

VIII. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

A. It is the policy of the Northampton Police Department that Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) should be easily accessible and readily available to its personnel. This debriefing is a psycho-educational process and does not necessarily take the place of professional counseling if needed.

The purpose is to provide a structured environment where an employee can ventilate about the reaction they have experienced. The following is a partial list of those incidents that may require a CISD:

1. Serious injury, suicide, or death of a co-worker.
2. Serious injury, death or suicide of a civilian where the sights, sounds, or smells are so distressing as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction.
3. Any other incident where the sights, sounds, or smells are so distressing as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction.
4. Loss of life of a co-worker or civilian which follows expenditure of physical and emotional energy in a rescue or resuscitation attempt.
5. A near death experience.
6. Any incident involving the use of lethal force by department personnel.
7. An incident that can be considered a serious physical or psychological threat to the personnel involved.
8. Incident where individual causes serious injury to, or is involved in taking the life of a person.
9. An unplanned occurrence, event, or disaster which threatens the peace or safety of the community.
10. Any planned or unplanned event which requires the management or use of significant department assets.

B. The supervisor is responsible to initiate the primary activation of the response team. Within 24 hours of the incident, the supervisor will talk with those personnel involved with the incident and determine whether a debriefing is needed. The supervisor will notify the Captain of Operations of the need for a debriefing, and the Captain of Operations will decide if a debriefing is to occur. In the absence of the Captain of Operations, the Captain of Administration will decide if a debriefing is to occur. All information in a debriefing shall be confidential.

Following involvement in such a critical incident, employees may display any of a variety of symptoms or characteristic of psychological distress. These symptoms may include:

1. Being unable to talk about the event and the feelings associated with it.

2. Feeling detached and withdrawn, keeping emotional distance from family and friends.
3. Avoiding activities that are reminders of the incident.
4. Experiencing recurring and intruding memories, feelings, or dreams about the incident.
5. Feeling preoccupied and experiencing impaired memory and concentration that results in difficulty completing tasks.
6. Difficulty sleeping, feeling hyper, alert, startling easily.
7. Increased use/abuse of alcohol, medications or other drugs.

It is important to emphasize that employees with these symptoms are experiencing normal responses to abnormal events. Supervisors must also recognize that the employee may not display any symptoms after a traumatic event and may in fact feel excited and good about what has happened even if it involved the taking or loss of another human life.

IX. Annual Review [35.1.8 (4a)]

A documented annual review of this system will be conducted.