Peers Support

Peer Support Program 3-Day Course (24 Hours)

Purpose: The purpose of this course is to provide law enforcement sworn and professional peer support personnel with the necessary information, skills, and resources to be able to complete their peer support duties effectively.

Learning Outcomes: When responding to law enforcement personnel in a peer support capacity, graduates of this course will be able to recognize when an employee is having problems, effectively respond with supportive interventions, and, when necessary, provide the employee with additional resources and referrals.

PSP – Day 1

1. Peer Support Program Overview

Learning objective: Students will describe the history and effectiveness of peer support in law enforcement. They will also identify who is eligible to receive peer support services, and describe the training and administrative requirements for peer supporters.

Minimum Topics

- **History of peer support among law enforcement (informal and formal)**
- **Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017**
- **Eligibility for peer support**
- **Training requirements for peer supporters**
- **Administrative requirements for peer supporters**

2. Ethics in Peer Support

Learning objective: Students will identify four ethical principles and discuss their applications in peer support.

Minimum Topics

- Confidentiality
- Informed consent
- Avoidance of dual relationships
- Knowing your limitations/When to refer

Learning activity – Students will be given various ethical dilemma vignettes to identify the issue and propose a solution. Class discussion to follow.

3. Basic Helping Skills (Part 1)

Learning objective: Students will utilize basic helping skills to recognize distress, offer help, establish rapport, engender hope, and set goals.

Minimum Topics

- Recognizing distress
- Offering help
- Rapport-building skills
- Engendering hope
- Effective goal-setting

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify their own signs and symptoms of distress. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Role play to practice skills learned to identify signs of distress, offer help, and establish rapport. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will practice effective goal-setting skills using vignettes provided by the instructor. Class discussion to follow.

4. Basic Helping Skills (Part 2)

Learning objective: Students will identify the six helping response modes and utilize the 10-Step Action Plan problem solving approach.

Minimum Topics

- 6 helping response modes—questions, advice, interpretations, self-disclosure, attentive silence, and reflections
- 10-step action plan problem solving approach

Learning activity – Students will be provided with a vignette demonstrating ineffective use of a helping response mode and asked to identify why the helping response mode might have been ineffective, and propose additional helping response mode(s) to more effectively engage with the peer support contact. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will role play peer support interactions using the 10-step action plan problem solving approach worksheet. Class discussion to follow.

5. Alcohol and Substance Misuse

Learning objective: Students will identify the signs/symptoms of alcohol and substance misuse, identify the risks of misuse specific to law enforcement personnel, interpret the Stages of Change recovery model, and identify treatment resources.

Minimum topics

- Signs and symptoms of alcohol and substance misuse
- Risks of misuse among law enforcement personnel
- AUDIT alcohol use self-assessment tool
- Stage of Change model
- Substance-related treatment resources (internal and external resources)

Learning activity – Students will take the AUDIT self-assessment tool to familiarize themselves with this instrument and howit can be used in peer support interactions. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will be given vignettes that illustrate various Stages of Change. They will identify the stage and discuss among themselves in small groups. Class discussion to follow.

Assessment: Students will be given a written exam summarizing the content reviewed in day one. The exam will consist of multiple choice, matching, and fill-in questions. Students will also complete the course evaluation form for day one.

6. Course Conclusion

- Course review

- Questions and answers

PSP – Day 2

1. Advanced Helping Skills (Part 1) – Cognitive Behavioral Approaches

Learning objective: Students will discuss cognitive-behavioral approaches to address a peer support contact's resistance, identify and challenge cognitive distortions, and identify defense mechanisms.

Minimum Topics

- Techniques for ambivalent/resistant contacts
- Cognitive distortions
- Defense mechanisms

Learning activity – Students will be given vignettes that demonstrate common ambivalent/resistant peer support contacts. They will identify and role play techniques to address the contact's ambivalence/resistance. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify their own automatic thoughts, type(s) of cognitive distortions, and identify a more balanced thought. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify their defense mechanisms during a period of emotional discomfort, identify how this helped them cope, and identify potential problems with the type of defense mechanism used. Class discussion to follow.

2. Stress Management

Learning objective: Students will identify the general signs and symptoms of stress and potential consequences of poor stress management. They will develop a stress management plan that includes healthy coping strategies.

Minimum Topics

- Define “stress”
- The Stress Continuum
- Common signs and symptoms of stress
- Stress self-assessment (Personal Stress Inventory and Life Stress Test)
- Healthy coping skills
- Formulating a stress management plan

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify signs and symptoms of stress, including when they are experiencing too little stress, optimal stress, and too much stress. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will take two stress self-assessment tools to familiarize themselves with these instruments and understand their use in peer support interactions. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will use vignettes to develop a stress management plan. Class discussion to follow.

3. Advanced Helping Skills (Part 2) – Helping a Person in Crisis

Learning objective: Students will identify general characteristics of a person in crisis, recognize specific issues related to law enforcement personnel in crisis, and apply techniques to support an individual through a crisis.

Minimum Topics

- Defining “crisis” (single incident versus cumulative incidents)
- Signs and symptoms of a crisis
- Stages of a crisis
- Law enforcement-related issues contributing to a crisis
- Techniques to support an individual through a crisis

Learning activity – Using personal and professional experiences dealing with people in crisis, students will list physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral signs and symptoms of a crisis. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will be given vignettes illustrating peer support contacts in crisis. They will select possible supportive interventions to utilize. If time permits, students will role play techniques to support a peer support contact in crisis. Class discussion to follow.

4. Critical Incidents

Learning objective: Students will define and identify various types of critical incidents, identify common stress reactions following a critical incident, and discuss the debriefing process.

Minimum Topics

- Define “critical incident” and identify types of critical incidents
- Common post-incident stress reactions
- Defusing
- Critical incident debriefing (CISD and Mitchell Model)
- Coping strategies
- Role of peer support following a critical incident
- Resources and referrals

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral signs and symptoms following a critical incident. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will use vignettes of critical incident scenarios to identify supportive strategies they might utilize in peer support contacts. Class discussion to follow.

5. Relationship Problems and Domestic Violence

Learning objective: Students will identify contributing factors to relationship problems and domestic violence among law enforcement personnel. They will describe the Cycle of Violence and identify indicators of life threatening domestic violence, as well as identify resources and examine strategies for peer support interventions.

Minimum Topics

- **Common types of relationship problems**
- **Supportive strategies to address ongoing relationship and end of relationship issues**
- **Types of domestic violence**
- **Cycle of Violence**
- **Indicators of life threatening domestic violence and strategies for peer support interventions**
- **Resources and referrals**

Learning activity – Students will role play supportive strategies to address ongoing relationship and end of relationship issues. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will be given vignettes illustrating domestic violence, identify indicators of violence, and choose potential strategies to utilize in a peer support contact. Class discussion to follow.

Assessment: Students will be given a written exam summarizing the content reviewed in day two. The exam will consist of multiple choice, matching, and fill-in questions. Students will also complete the course evaluation form for day two.

6. Course Conclusion

- Course review
- Questions and answers

PSP – Day 3

1. Anger Management

Learning objective: Students will identify and practice tools to increase awareness of anger, assertively and appropriately express anger, control inappropriate anger, and develop an anger management plan.

Minimum Topics

- Increasing awareness of anger
- Assertively and appropriately expressing anger (three-step rule)
- Anger control techniques
- Developing a personal anger management plan

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify their individual "red flags" for anger. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will be given a worksheet to practice the "three-step rule" for assertively and appropriately expressing anger (describe the behavior, describe what it felt like, and suggest what change you would like to remedy the situation). Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will practice writing an anger management plan and discuss howthis tool might

be helpful in peer support interactions.

2. Suicide Prevention

Learning objective: Students will describe suicide facts versus myths, discuss elements of a suicide risk assessment, identify treatment options and resources, and demonstrate appropriate peer support interventions when dealing with a suicidal contact.

Minimum Topics

- Common suicide myths versus facts
- Suicide assessment
- Procedures and referrals when dealing with a suicidal contact (AID LIFE)

Learning activity – Students will receive multiple statements about suicide and identify whether they believe it is a myth or fact. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will role play peer support interventions with a suicidal contact. Class discussion to follow.

3. Grief, Loss, and Depression

Learning objective: Students will describe general characteristics of grief, loss, and depression. They will also identify peer support intervention strategies, referrals, and resources

Minimum Topics

- Common signs and symptoms of depression

- Treatment options for depression (including referrals and resources)
- Stages of grief and loss
- Common components of grief
- Supportive strategies

Learning activity – Students will be shown a variety of videos depicting individuals who have dealt with grief, loss, and/or depression. They will work in small groups to identify signs and symptoms, stages of grief and loss, and other components of grief and loss. Class discussion to follow.

4. Unexpected Time Off Work: Illness, Injury, and Investigations

Learning objective: Students will identify common issues related to illness, injury, and investigations including functional impairments, financial concerns, and stigma.

Minimum Topics

- Common reactions to illness, injury, and/or investigations
- Managing pain and medical recovery
- Functional impairments
- Financial concerns
- Stigma

Learning activity – Students will be given vignettes illustrating issues related to illness, injury, and investigations. Working in small groups, students will identify reactions and possible supportive strategies to help a contact who is experiencing any of these issues.

5. Compassion Fatigue and Peer Survival

Learning objective: Students will describe burnout and compassion fatigue, utilize self-assessment tools,

and identify strategies to recognize limits and maintain adequate self-care.

Minimum Topics

- **Burnout**
- **Compassion fatigue**
- **Self-assessment tools (Freudenberger Burnout Scale and PROQOL)**
- **Recognizing limits**
- **Self-care**

Learning activity – Students will take the burnout and compassion fatigue self-assessment tools to familiarize themselves with these instruments and their potential use in peer support interactions. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will engage in a self-reflective activity to identify their personal limits related to peer support functions. Class discussion to follow.

Learning activity – Students will develop their own self-care action plan. Class discussion to follow.

Assessment: Students will be given a written exam summarizing the content reviewed in day three. The exam will consist of multiple choice, matching, and fill-in questions. Students will also complete the course evaluation form for day three.

6. Course Conclusion

- Course review
- Questions and answers