A. Policy

The Lakewood Police Department recognizes the need to have a trained staff of employees willing to lend emotional support to fellow employees, who have engaged in or witnessed a traumatic event. Oftentimes, an employee can better relate to a fellow employee, who has experienced a traumatic incident, as the emotional, physical and psychological responses are similarly shared. It is the purpose of the employee peer support group to ease the emotional, physical, and psychological effects caused by a traumatic event. The employee peer support group is not intended to replace, but rather to augment the professional counseling services offered by the City of Lakewood.

B. Procedure

1. Participation in the Peer Support Team shall be voluntary and in addition to the any regular duty assignment.

2. Past experience in a critical incident shall be a factor for consideration for placement on the Peer Support Team, along with communication skills and the recommendation of a supervisor.

3. To be considered for selection to the Peer Support Team, a civilian employee, agent or sergeant shall have completed their probationary period.

4. The Peer Support Team shall be comprised of agents, civilian employees, and sergeants. A roster of Peer Support Team personnel will be maintained in the Communications Center and the Sector Commanders’ Office.

5. The Peer Support Team will receive an initial two-day seminar of training from a qualified psychologist or therapist. Quarterly meetings will be conducted for training updates and case follow-up regarding critical incident contacts.

6. The Peer Support Team may provide assistance, when requested, under the following circumstances:

   a. When an agent or agents of the Lakewood Police Department have been involved in a shooting incident.

   b. When an agent has been involved in a serious critical incident, as defined in Section 4506, either on or off duty, which may emotionally impact the agent.

   C. When a supervisor feels a situation warrants involvement by the Peer Support Team.

7. The Peer Support Team shall be activated in the following manner:
a. The Sector Commander shall contact a Peer Support Sergeant or Agent and request they respond to the proper location to provide the necessary assistance.

b. The Peer Support Sergeant or Agent will make a determination as to whether additional Peer Support personnel are needed.

8. The Peer Support Sergeant or Agent who responds is responsible for:

a. Coordination with the supervisors of the Use of Force Investigating Team and the Personnel Investigations Unit to begin the peer support process after the investigative and administrative interviews are complete.

b. Assessing the need for additional Peer Support agents and/or assistance from the Victim/Witness Assistance Unit.

c. Maintaining liaison with the involved agent and his/her family members and assuring that the varying needs of the agent or family members are met.

C. Rule

1. Communication between a peer support agent and the agent involved in a critical incident is not confidential. Peer Support personnel do have a responsibility to divulge information revealed by the involved employee regarding any potential criminal or administrative violation as a result of the critical incident. The information will be relayed to a Peer Support Sergeant, who will ensure that proper notifications are made through the chain of command.

2. A victim employee's use of the Peer Support Group is strictly voluntary.

3. Peer Support personnel shall not be actively involved in the handling or the investigation of the specific critical incident.