



# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario*

---

## **O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Program Guideline**

### **PURPOSE**

To provide a guideline regarding the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) Chief Officer Peer Support Program. The goal of peer support is to provide all members with the opportunity to receive emotional and tangible support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties. These guidelines are intended to provide information and recommendations on forming and maintaining a peer support structure.

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

*Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) Board of Directors* – The O AFC Board of Directors is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the Chief Officer Peer Support Program.

*Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) Health & Safety Advisory Committee* – The O AFC Health & Safety Advisory Committee is responsible for the specific oversight (acting as a program steering committee) of the Chief Officer Peer Support Program, including reviewing this guideline on an annual basis (at minimum), revising this guideline (and any supporting documents) as needed and reviewing the program data and analytics to ensure it is operating in an effective manner.

*Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) Staff* – O AFC staff are responsible for marketing the program, ensuring the program component of the website remains functional and executing the day-to-day program work.

*Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) Chief Officer Peer Support Team Members* – The members of the O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Program are responsible for providing support to O AFC members (as described in this guideline), in accordance with this guideline, while adhering to confidentiality requirements. Peer Support Team members are also responsible for attending required training and executing their duties in accordance with training. A Peer Support Team member is trained to provide both day-to-day emotional support for members as well as to participate in a response to critical incidents. Peer Support Team members are trained to recognize and refer cases that require professional intervention or are beyond their scope of training to a licensed mental health professional.

### **GUIDELINES**

#### **1. General**

1.1. Personal and work problems are a normal part of life. Support from a Peer can help an individual look at situations differently while providing information and guidance to help make decisions, respond to issues, and resolve difficulties.

The O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Program can provide peer to peer advice and direct members to the proper professionals for further on-going assistance.



# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario*

---

- 1.2. Most problems can be resolved with early intervention. Problems that are ignored may become more serious. Members are encouraged to seek early assistance to help reduce the potential for negative effects on personal and family life, as well as job performance.
- 1.3. The purpose and intent of the Chief Officer Peer Support Program is to provide members with advice and assistance to minimize stress and mitigate personal health and professional performance issues.
- 1.4. When contacted, Chief Officer Peer Support team members are able to:
  - Listen and be present
  - Monitor for acute reactions
  - Provide support and encouragement
  - Provide advice and assistance on professional matters
  - Refer the member to more sustainable resources

## **2. O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team**

- 2.1. The O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team offers members assistance with a wide range of issues including, but not limited to the following:
  - a) Work conflict
  - b) Work performance issues or challenges
  - c) Communication difficulties
  - d) Personal, family or relationship issues
  - e) Anxiety/depression
  - f) Stress/health/lifestyle
  - g) Loss and bereavement
  - h) Traumatic mental stress/critical incidents
  - i) Other personal/professional challenges
  - j) Threatened employment or termination
  - k) Line of Duty death or firefighter suicide
  - l) Support with career-related issues
  - m) Death notification
  - n) On scene support following critical incidents



# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario*

---

- 2.2. The O AFC Peer Support Team is in place to provide:
  - a) Crisis intervention
  - b) Advice and assistance
  - c) Support
  - d) Psychological first aid
  - e) Information
  - f) Referrals
- 2.3. It is important to recognize that this is a support program designed to provide a peer who can provide initial support, assistance, and referrals. Peer support team members are not mental health professionals and do not diagnose or treat.
- 2.4. These services are provided to normalize common reactions when faced with a critical incident or personal/professional stress, and/or to mitigate issues related to mental health at home and/or in the workplace.
- 2.5. The O AFC Peer Support Team will encourage resiliency, provide education, support, and reinforce coping strategies for the impacted member.
- 3. Peer Support Team Members Roles and Responsibilities**
  - 3.1. Peer Support Team members are O AFC members who have volunteered to be a Peer Support Team member and received the appropriate training. Peers serve as models of healthy behaviour and coping skills for members involved in a critical event or who may be coping with personal or professional stress.
  - 3.2. Peer Support Team members are responsible to follow and adhere to the O AFC Peer Support Team Code of Conduct and fulfill duties as outlined in this guideline. Confidentiality is a core element of the Peer support model and is embedded in the Code of Conduct.
  - 3.4. Peer Support Team members must be members in good standing and undergone third party mental health assessment for suitability to the program.
  - 3.5. Considerations for selection of Peer Support Team candidates include, but are not limited to, previous education and training; demographic (type of department & department location) capacity to take on the role; resolved traumatic experiences and desirable personal qualities such as maturity, judgment, personal and professional ethics, and credibility.



# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario*

---

- 3.6 The O AFC Board of Directors shall be responsible for deselecting candidates, which may be done at any time it is deemed to be warranted. Possible criteria for deselection include breach of confidentiality, loss of good standing with the O AFC, failure to attend/maintain training.
- 4. Making the Contact / Reaching out**
- 4.1. Shaun Cameron, O AFC Program and Policy Advisor can be contacted at (905) 426-9865 ext. 1223 or via email [shaun.cameron@oafc.on.ca](mailto:shaun.cameron@oafc.on.ca) for more information or if a member would like to discuss the Chief Officer Peer Support Program.
- 4.2 Individual Chief Officer Peer Support Team Members can also be contacted via PeerONCall app.
- 4.3. Contacting the O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team are confidential. Information about who has used the O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team is not disclosed. No one knows that a person has used the program unless it is divulged by, or consent is provided by the individual making the call.
- 4.4. Personal information is released only with the individual's informed, voluntary, and written consent. However, there are some exceptions when Chief Officer Peer Support Team members may be required to provide information obtained, even if consent is not given. The criteria for these exceptions are clearly defined and specific to ensure confidentiality. Chief Officer Peer Support Team members have a professional duty to report suspected child abuse and to protect individuals when they pose a serious threat to themselves or others. Chief Officer Peer Support Team members may also be compelled to provide information under the law (e.g. court order or subpoena).
- 4.5. Statistical information about the program is collected and reported in a summary format that protects the identities of our members. Statistical reports contain information relating to the number of calls and the number of hours worked by the Chief Officer Peer Support Team members. No information on individuals or any meetings details or notes are kept or recorded.
- 4.6. Use of the O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team is voluntary.
- 4.7. There is no cost to the member for the Chief Officer Peer Support Team services.
- 4.8 Additionally, members seeking assistance may contact the O AFC office (available during working hours only) who would conduct an initial screening and match the member seeking assistance with an available Peer Support Team member.



# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario*

---

## 5. Eligible Members

- 5.1. All Individual O AFC members (as defined in the O AFC Constitution) can access O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Program services. This includes O AFC members for 90 days following active service (i.e. post termination of employment).
- 5.2. Retired O AFC members can also access O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Program services.

## 6. Training

- 6.1. All Chief Officer Support Team members shall receive peer support team training; and then receive refresher and ongoing training.

## 7. Data Collection

- 7.1. Anonymous statistical information is tracked to show the utilization of the peer support program. Anonymous statistical information can be used as a guide to increase the amount of Peer Support Team members, to monitor the hours worked per Peer Support Team member, and also to justify to the organization why a Chief Officer Peer Support Program is necessary. It also helps the O AFC recognize program training needs.



# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

*We are the trusted leader in fire services by inspiring and influencing a safer Ontario*

---

## **O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team Code of Conduct**

\*Adopted from Peer Support Canada

As an O AFC Chief Officer Peer Support Team member, I will adhere to the following Code of Conduct:

- I will act ethically, according to the values and principles of peer support
- I will treat all people with respect and dignity
- I will respect human diversity and will foster non-discriminatory activities
- I will honour the rights, beliefs and personal values of individuals
- I will behave with honesty and integrity in providing support to peers
- I will respect the privacy of individuals and maintain confidentiality within the limitations or program policies and the law (i.e. potential harm to self or other)
- I will not knowingly expose a peer to harm
- I will not take advantage of the peer relationship for personal benefit, material or financial gain
- I will respect the boundaries of peer support work and will not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the peers that I support
- I will not provide peer support in a manner that negatively affects the public's confidence in peer support.