

## **FALL RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT**

### **Employee Assistance Program and Peer Support Unit**

The purpose of the Fall River Police Department Peer Support Unit (PSU) is to provide stress reduction, prevention, and education to Department personnel who may be experiencing adverse emotional issues in their lives. Members of the unit administer, in conjunction with Family Service Association, a program that has been developed to provide, among other services, critical incident debriefing to officers who have been involved in extremely stressful situations while performing their professional duties. This program is a component of the Fall River Police Department Employee Assistance Program (EAP), operated under contract with Family Service Association ([www.frfsa.org](http://www.frfsa.org)).

It is the policy of the Fall River Police Department to encourage and sometimes require the utilization of the services provided by the Peer Support Unit. Officers serving as members of the Peer Support Unit will be available to assist and respond to officers involved in critical incidents or to officers experiencing stress associated with their work or personal lives. Under the guidance of an established Department standard operating procedure, Department personnel may be required to attend a limited number of consecutive weekly sessions conducted by the Peer Support Unit. These sessions are intended to provide an opportunity for participants to discuss incidents or issues that may contribute to stress or may adversely affect their lives and/or the lives of their loved ones.

The Peer Support Unit consists of up to ten (1) volunteer police officers who devote their time to provide support to other officers within the Department. Peer Support Officers meet weekly at Family Service Association's facility at 151 Rock Street for approximately ninety (90) minutes. The weekly sessions are held on Tuesday afternoons and feature two major components:

- Training – Peer Support Officers receive training and participate in discussion regarding the impact of stressful incidents on the lives of police officers and their families.
- Critical Incident Response – Peer Support Officers meet with other officers who either volunteer or are mandated to attend four consecutive weekly group sessions for the purpose of participating in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

Peer Support Officers also respond individually or in groups to assist fellow officers and their families outside the structure of the weekly sessions when it is deemed necessary by events.

All discussions conducted and comments made by participants are kept strictly confidential and are not discussed outside the meeting room. Participants may speak with others about their own comments, but must not disclose comments made by other group participants.

Officers and other Department personnel may be required to attend Critical Incident Stress Debriefing sessions when they are involved in the following categories of events:

- police involved shootings (if officers are fired upon and/or discharge their firearm while carrying out their duties)
- other incidents involving lethal force
- death or serious injury of a Department member
- prolonged, failed rescue attempts
- incidents involving death or serious injury to children
- incidents involving accident or injury of gross atrocity
- any other incident that has a high emotional impact on those responding, or is beyond the realm of a person's usual experience that overwhelms his/her sense of vulnerability or a lack of control over the situation

In addition, Family Service Association facilitates referrals for confidential individual, couple and family therapy services for police officers and their families. There is no cost to FRPD personnel for information and referral service provided by the Employee Assistance Program. If the employee or family member is referred to the EAP for counseling, the cost may be covered in part or in full by the employee's health benefits plan. If counseling is provided at Family Service Association under circumstances where such benefits are not applicable, the agency's sliding fee scale, based on ability to pay, will be implemented.