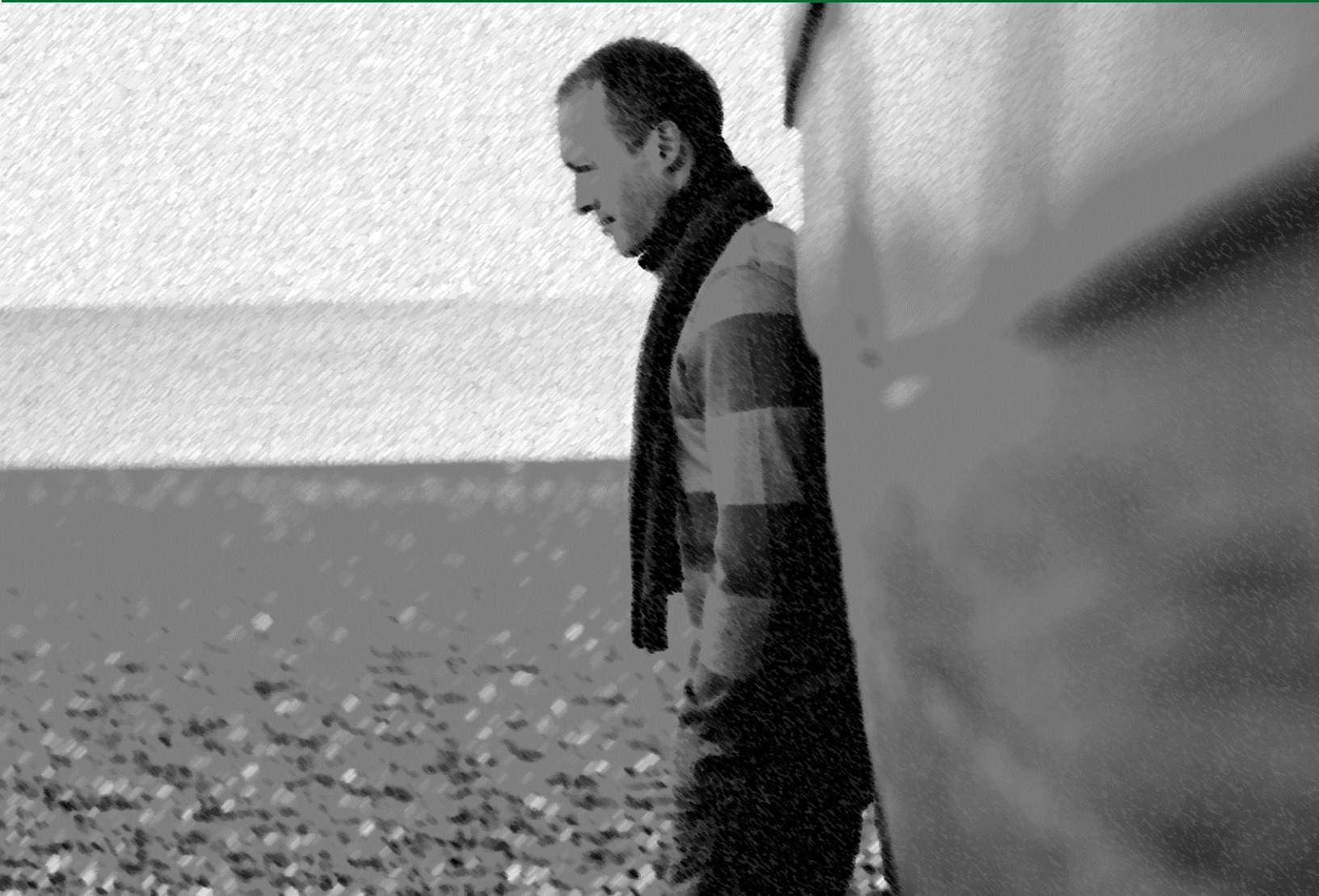


**Government of Saskatchewan**

**Critical Incident Stress Management Guidelines**

*Appendix: Peer Support Team Selection Criteria and  
Training for Executive Government*



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## 1. Introduction

This appendix provides guidance for ministry work units that are considering the implementation of Peer Support Teams and covers the following components:

- Selection, Assessment and Suitability of Peer Support Team Members.
- Training of Peer Support Team Members.
- Ongoing Support of Peer Support Team Members.

General information regarding Peer Support Teams is available in the Government of Saskatchewan's [Critical Incident Stress Management Guidelines](#) and is the reference for understanding the functions of Peer Support Teams, choosing whether to have a Peer Support Team and the process a Peer Support Team follows when responding to a workplace critical incident.

If a ministry work unit has chosen to implement a Peer Support Team, it is recommended Team members undergo an assessment to determine their suitability, and then attend training. Ministry work units who choose the Peer Support Team process stream may utilize this appendix in selecting and training Peer Support Team members.

## 2. Definition of a Peer Support Team

A Peer Support Team is composed of Government of Saskatchewan employees trained to respond to employees after a workplace critical incident.

A Peer Support Team is an extra layer of response, in addition to the manager. They are particularly assistive in ministries that deal with a variety of stressful and unpredictable clients, situations or work environments. Peer Support Team members provide emotional and social support to co-workers who share a common experience.

No workplace is required to have a Peer Support Team. If the duties employees perform in a workplace routinely expose them to challenging clients and work environments, a Peer Support Team as an option can offer:

- On-site and immediate response.
- Recognition that an event is out of the ordinary and likely to cause emotional distress.
- Recognition when employees are 'not themselves' after an event.
- An ability to assist the manager/supervisor of the workplace affected in responding to the critical incident and to LifeWorks

Overall, the purpose of Peer Support Teams is to:

- Reduce psychological harm through symptom reduction and stabilization to prevent distress from worsening.
- Re-establish healthy emotional and psychological functional capacity.
- Seek further assistance with the Government of Saskatchewan manager to LifeWorks when higher level assistance may be required.

The Government of Saskatchewan's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) administrator, Morneau Shepell, offers critical incident services. The role of Peer Support Team members is to be complementary to their manager or supervisor in determining when to access these services. If a need for mental health professional

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intervention is recognized, Peer Support Team members and their manager or supervisor consult Morneau Shepell. When authorized by the manager, a mental health professional can assist the manager, supervisor and Peer Support Team further respond, or be additionally deployed on-site. This helps to ensure that managers, supervisors and Peer Support Team members are supported and protected from taking on pressures beyond the scope of their roles.

### 3. Peer Support Team Roles and Responsibilities

To ensure alignment and coordination, it is recommended that a variety of roles and responsibilities are defined for Peer Support Teams.

#### 3.1. Peer Support Coordinator

The Integrated Health, Safety and Wellness Branch in the Public Service Commission provides Peer Support Coordinator assistance.

**Responsibilities include:**

- Oversee the Government of Saskatchewan Critical Incident and Stress Management Guidelines.
- Assist ministry work units in determining whether to implement a Peer Support Team.
- Assist and monitor the establishment, maintenance, and function of Peer Support Teams.
- Provide ongoing support to Peer Support Team Leaders.
- Assist ministry work units in sending Peer Support Team members to attend, or in coordinating, Critical Incident Response Training (CIRT) with Morneau Shepell.
- Organize meetings between all Peer Support Team Leaders across Executive Government as required.
- Collect Peer Support Team data for statistical reports.

#### 3.2 Peer Support Team Leader(s)

The Peer Support Team Leader is an appointed position that may be determined by the Ministry's Safety Champion, the relevant Ministry work unit manager, members of the Peer Support Team and/or assessment criteria used in identifying Peer Support Team member candidates.

**Responsibilities include:**

- Maintain a collaborative working relationship with the Ministry work unit's manager(s)/supervisor(s).
  - Lead the Ministry work unit's Peer Support Team. This can include coordinating Team and/or one-on-one debriefings and meetings, assessing the Team member's competence responding within their scope, recognizing when a Team member's well-being has been impacted and assisting them to the appropriate resource, etc.
  - Engage and consult with the Peer Support Coordinator, exchange information, and attend meetings as required.
  - Assist the Ministry work unit manager in maintaining sufficient competent Peer Support Team membership and storage of training records.
  - Collaborate with the Ministry work unit manager and other relevant supports in determining Peer Support Team activation and response expectations and processes.
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- Ensure Team’s confidentiality and privacy of information and details about events.
- Assist the Ministry work unit manager in promoting awareness of active Peer Support Team Members and the Team’s scope of responsibilities.
- Maintain a call-out-sheet, chain-of-command or other related structured response process.
- Complete a Peer Support Team Functioning and individual Peer Support Team Member Review annually.
- Maintain equipment and supplies necessary to workplace critical incident response.
- Coordinate local Peer Support Team meetings as required.
- Ensure the Team remains up-to-date on current knowledge and trends. The Peer Support Coordinator will perform research, best practice and information updates as they become available and communicate them to Team Leaders.
- Positively represent the Peer Support Team.

**Qualifications include:**

- CIRT as outlined within this Appendix.
- Demonstrated leadership skills: respect of peers; ability to maintain confidentiality; continual learner; ability to supervise/support Peer Support Team members and Team needs; and, other criteria as defined in section 4.

### **3.3 Ministry Work Unit Manager**

The Ministry work unit manager ensures that Peer Support Teams are able to effectively function and respond to workplace critical incidents, and function within the scope of their role as Peer Support Team members.

**Responsibilities include:**

- Ensure the Peer Support Team receives timely and effective communication, and senior leadership support.
  - Ensure an effective Peer Support Team Leader is appointed as per criteria.
  - Ensure the Peer Support Team is supported in recruiting and maintaining sufficient and competent membership, and is functioning in accordance with Peer Support Team guidelines/ scope/ responsibilities as per section 4 of this appendix.
  - Collaborate with the Team Leader and other relevant supports in determining Peer Support Team activation and response expectations.
  - Ensure Team maintains confidentiality and privacy of information and details about events.
  - Promote awareness to employees of active Peer Support Team Members and the Team’s scope of responsibilities.
  - Maintain a call-out-sheet, chain-of-command or other related structured response process.
  - Complete a Peer Support Team Leader Review annually.
  - Ensure equipment and supplies necessary for workplace critical incident response is available to the Team.
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**Qualifications include:**

- It is recommended that Ministry work unit managers that collaborate with Peer Support Team attend Critical Incident Response Training.

### 3.4 Peer Support Team Members

It is strongly recommended that employees undergo a defined selection and assessment process before being appointed as Peer Support Team members. If a candidate is determined to be suitable for the role, the candidate is appointed to the Peer Support Team by the Ministry work unit manager and/or the Peer Support Team Leader.

**Responsibilities include:**

- Play an active role in Peer Support Team activities as led by the Peer Support Team Leader.
- Ensure confidentiality and privacy of information and details about events.
- Function within the scope of responsibilities as a Peer Support Team member.
- Assist the Team Leader in promoting active Peer Support Team membership, Team's scope of responsibilities and related awareness and communications to employees.
- Be an active participant in Peer Support Team meetings.
- Positively represent the Peer Support Team.
- Inform Team Leader of any concerns or difficulties experienced.

**Qualifications include:**

- Criteria as defined in section 4, Selection of Peer Support Team Members.
- CIRT as outlined within this Appendix.

### 3.5. LifeWorks

LifeWorks is the Government of Saskatchewan EFAP administrator. Their service includes supporting managers and Peer Support Teams after a workplace critical incident. They are also the provider of the Peer Support Team CIRT.

**Responsibilities include:**

- Provide clinical guidance to Ministry work unit managers/supervisor and Peer Support Team members after a workplace critical incident.
- Provide CIRT.
- Consults by phone or deploys a mental health professional to the workplace upon the Ministry work unit manager's approval when it is determined the appropriate level of response.

### 3.6. Selection Committee

Ministries may choose the best composition for a selection committee that meets their needs. For example, the selection committee may be composed of the Peer Support Team Leader(s) and/or Ministry Work Unit Manager and/or other managers as deemed necessary. Selection committee members should have a thorough understanding of critical incident stress management response and the qualities of successful peer support team members.

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**Responsibilities include:**

- Follow the selection criteria process to assess peer support candidates and choose successful candidates.
- Engage and consult with the Peer Support Coordinator and LifeWorks as required.

## **4. Selection Criteria and Assessment of Peer Support Team Members**

Appointing Peer Support Team Members is an important consideration. Employees who volunteer, are nominated or are asked to become a member may not be suited for the role. To help ensure that Peer Support Team members succeed in the role, it is recommended that candidates are evaluated based on selection criteria.

### **4.1 Selection Criteria Process and Assessment**

The Ministry work unit manager and Peer Support Team Leader may consult the Peer Support Coordinator and LifeWorks when selecting Peer Support team members. Individual ministry processes may also exist within the appointment processes.

The selection process is a method of assessment to determine suitability that helps to ensure that Peer Support Team members are a personal and professional fit for the role. The selection process is undertaken to assist peer support candidates in understanding the nature and implications of taking on a Peer Support Team role. This includes the risk of personal psychological injury from participation in a Peer Support Team and being directly involved in traumatic events that involve taking on the emotions of others affected. For those on the selection committee, the process is a means of selecting Peer Support Team members that will be successful in the role.

Ministries may have additional considerations in selecting peer support team members, including selecting diverse representation from the following:

- In-scope and out-of-scope employees.
- Different work units.
- Different locations.
- Different language, gender, ethnicity, age etc.

**There are several ways to recruit peer support candidates:**

**1. A Call for Nominations**

Ministry work unit employees are asked to nominate a peer based on the selection criteria below.

**2. A Call for Volunteers**

Ministry work unit employees are asked to consider volunteering to be on the Peer Support Team if they identify with the selection criteria below.

**3. Identify or Recognize**

A Ministry work unit manager or Peer Support Team Leader may notice an employee with a high potential and ask the individual to consider becoming a candidate.

**4. Self-identification**

An employee may ask to be considered a candidate.

**The following criteria will help in selecting candidates for interview.**

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“Bring” competencies denote competencies a candidate is expected to bring to the table. “Learn” competencies denote items that may be learned through ongoing training and development. “Other considerations” refers to additional criteria that should be considered in the selection of a candidate.

**Bring Competencies include:**

1. Integrity, Authenticity and Trustworthy  
Does the candidate demonstrate honesty through their actions and authenticity in their interactions? Is the candidate trusted by their peers?
2. Interpersonal Communication  
Is the candidate an effective communicator that can ask appropriate questions and deliver clear messages at the appropriate level? Is the candidate socially skilled and emotionally intelligent?
3. Teamwork and collaboration  
Does the candidate demonstrate an ability to work constructively with others? Does the candidate demonstrate self-confidence and initiative, a desire to learn from others and an ability to both give and receive advice? Does the candidate appear to be a good fit for the Peer Support Team and its goals?

**Learn Competencies include:**

4. Boundary-setting  
Has the candidate demonstrated an ability to set and maintain boundaries between work-related and non-work-related issues, as well as set boundaries between co-workers that ensure productive yet meaningful relationships? Is there a clear understanding of a peer support team member’s area of responsibility and expertise compared to the responsibility and expertise of others, such as clinical professionals, when collaborating?
5. Confidentiality  
Is the candidate aware of the expectations of confidentiality in a peer support role? Is the candidate aware of privacy legislation and requirements? Does the candidate show a high regard for confidentiality?
6. Critical Thinking  
Is the candidate able to identify problems or issues, collect and organize information, analyze a situation, determine the best course of action, execute solutions, evaluate results and identify improvements?

**Other Considerations include:**

7. Motivation  
What has motivated the candidate to join the Peer Support Team? Are the reasons work-related?
  8. Workload Management  
Is the candidate able to effectively perform their primary job duties and devote the time required to attend training, meetings, ongoing learning and other relevant peer support duties?
  9. Health and Well-being  
Does the candidate take measures to care for their personal physical and psychological health? Do they promote workplace physical and psychological health? Is the candidate knowledgeable regarding, or
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demonstrate, a healthy coping and resiliency skillset?

**The next step of the selection criteria is an interview with the candidate(s) to identify and assess the suitability of Skills, Abilities and Personal Attributes that are:**

1. Derived from Lived Experience.
2. Related to Interpersonal Communication.
3. Demonstrate Critical Thinking.
4. Related to Teamwork and Collaboration.
5. Related to Ethics and Reliability.

*\*These skills, ability and personal attributes are based on the Mental Health Commission's Guidelines for the Practice and Training of Peer Support.*

## 4.2 Post Selection Criteria Process and Assessment

After the steps in 4.1 have been completed:

**If there remains uncertainty in candidate(s) suitability, LifeWorks can offer additional assessment at a fee-for-service:**

1. The Peer Support Team Leader will contact the Peer Support Coordinator to arrange the LifeWorks assessment.
2. LifeWorks will review the completed Selection Criteria form and will either:
  - provide consultation and guidance to the Ministry work unit manager/Peer Support Leader in making a decision; or,
  - recommend the candidate participate in a further assessment by a LifeWorks professional.
3. If further assessment by a LifeWorks professional is chosen, the Ministry work unit manager will approve the fee for this service through an Additional Service Contract, available through the Peer Support Coordinator.
4. The candidate will be contacted by LifeWorks to participate in the further assessment. The outcome of the assessment will then be discussed with the Ministry work unit manager/Peer Support Team Leader to make a decision.

**If the candidate or candidates are selected:**

1. The Peer Support Team Leader will contact the Peer Support Coordinator to arrange a date for CIRT.
2. All documentation related to the selection process will be maintained in the Ministry work unit manager's personnel file for the specific candidate(s).

## 5. Training of Peer Support Team Members

Critical Incident Response Training (CIRT) through LifeWorks is the Government of Saskatchewan's standardized training for peer support team members. CIRT has a defined scope for peer support role and responsibilities, is built off the Mitchell Model, and integrates with the Government of Saskatchewan EFAP processes.

**Other advantages of the CIRT include:**

- Customization of examples used in the training.
  - Continuity between ministries, which can support a ministry calling upon Peer Support Teams to assist other work units.
  - Administration processes supported centrally through the Peer Support Coordinator, and expertise through Morneau Shepell.
  - Alignment with the Government of Saskatchewan EFAP.
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- A link to related course offerings e.g. cumulative stress, care for the caregiver, etc.

## 5.1 Critical Incident Response Training

### **Name of Training**

Critical Incident Response Training (CIRT)

### **Length of Training**

Three days

### **Cost of Training**

Training rates are dependent on content and audience size. Virtual training does not contain extra costs. If the trainer is brought on-site, travel and accommodation costs will be in addition. Costs will be charged to the ministry that requests the training.

### **Training Framework**

Training is based on the Mitchell Model (the most common Critical Incident Stress Debriefing framework).

### **CIRT Training Program High Level Agenda**

Topics include: Expectations of participants, confidentiality and its exceptions, reasons for becoming a peer support team member, understanding the scope of your role, qualities of a peer support team member, effective communication skills, types of stress, operational stress injuries, understanding mental health, depression, suicide and substance abuse, resiliency, critical incident goals and CIRT response, common reactions, critical incident interventions, debriefing, defusing, post incident aftercare, indicators of distress, program promotion and personal development.

### **Learning Objectives**

At the end of CIRT training, participants will be able to do the following:

- Understand the normal reactions to traumatic stress.
- Comprehend how vicarious traumatization can affect crisis responders.
- Develop skills to become a helper and observe the boundaries associated with helping.
- Apply various intervention strategies such as demobilization, defusing, debriefing, follow up and stress management.
- Understand how to prepare for and engage in this type of work while minimizing the risk of burnout.

### **Skills Refresher**

The Peer Support Coordinator will coordinate meetings with Team Leaders to participate in discussions, networking, and ongoing learning. At these meetings it will be discussed which Peer Support Team members should be scheduled for a formal refresher. The more active a Peer Support Team member is in responding to incidents, may mean the timeline for a skills refresher can vary. The less active a member is may result in annual skills refresher being recommended.

Even though CIRT Training follows established standards that can be applied across all Peer Support Teams in Executive Government, if one work unit is arranging CIRT for a single Peer Support Team, there is an opportunity to customize the examples (including case studies, role plays and exercises) utilized in the training for alignment to their workplace.

If customization is being sought, the Peer Support Team Leader can arrange this through the Peer Support

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Coordinator. A cost to customize could apply at a rate of \$250 per hour of customization work. Costs would be approved by the Ministry work unit manager through an Additional Services Contract.

## 5.2 Records and Administration of Training

LifeWorks will maintain and provide training records for each participant of CIRT, and provide records to the Peer Support Coordinator after CIRT completion. The Peer Support Coordinator will maintain, and provide the training records to Peer Support Team Leaders.

LifeWorks will also provide services related to reminders and schedules for skills refresher. These schedules will be sent to the Peer Support Coordinator who will forward the information on to Peer Support Team Leaders.

## 6. Ongoing Support of Peer Support Team Members

The Peer Support Coordinator assists ministry work units in the establishment, maintenance and functioning of Peer Support Teams. This includes ongoing support to Peer Support Team Leaders through communications, networking and meetings between all Peer Support Team Leaders across Executive Government. Ongoing support will be available through the Peer Support Coordinator, the membership of the GoS peer support network and Morneau Shepell.

### 6.1 Ongoing Support Training Options

In addition to CIRT and CIRT skills refresher, other workshop and training available through LifeWorks include:

#### Care-for-the Caregiver

Two different Care-for-the Caregiver courses are available to Peer Support Team members:

##### 1. Caregiver Compassion Fatigue

This one-hour dynamic and interactive workshop helps working professionals who are exposed to trauma understand how they can be affected by the events that surround them and manage the risk of fatigue from their work.

Objectives include:

- Understanding the term *crisis* and the normal human reactions to crisis situations.
- Comprehending how staff is typically affected by the events that surround them.
- Defining the terms *trauma* versus *vicarious trauma*.
- Understanding the stages of burnout and recovery.
- Implementing self-care and holistic caregiver tips.

##### 2. Helping the Helper – Understanding & Coping with Cumulative Stress

This three-hour workshop recognizes the impact constant exposure to traumatic events and stressful situations may have by building up over time. Individuals who understand how they are impacted, can take steps to better manage these effects through support measures put in place to cope and build resiliency.

Objectives include:

- Gaining a deeper understanding of cumulative stress with respect to ‘high exposure’ teams.
- Recognizing the impacts of cumulative stress.
- Applying effective short-term and long-term strategies to manage cumulative stress.

Contact the Peer Support Coordinator for more information regarding the Care-for-the Caregiver course offerings for ministry work unit Peer Support Team members.

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## 6.2 Additional Support Resources

- Acute and Cumulative Workplace Stress Management Guidelines are an additional resource for Peer Support Team members and employees who work in high stress work environments.
- The Government of Saskatchewan's [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) provides access to short-term professional counselling, and additional services.

## 6.3 Annual Check-ins

Peer Support Team Leaders may arrange time for check-ins with their peer support team members on at least an annual basis to reaffirm commitment, determine ongoing training and development needs and ensure that team members feel adequately supported in their roles.

## 6.4 Aftercare

Aftercare check-ins following an incident response will be provided to Peer Support Team members. The Peer Support Team Leader is responsible for scheduling a check-in with Peer Support Team members following each incident response. The Peer Support Team Leader will determine whether a need for additional aftercare is required based on the check-in.

## 6.5 Transitioning off of the Team

There are several reasons why a Peer Support Team Member or Leader may request to be transitioned off of the team. Job changes, workload management, personal life circumstances and emotional distress or coping challenges are some of the reasons why a transition off the team may be required. Peer Support Team members may also realize that the role is not a fit for them or the team may recognize that an individual's performance does not meet the requirements for the role.

Peer Support Team members are to speak to their Peer Support Team Leader regarding transitioning off of a team. The Peer Support Team Leader and Peer Support Team member should discuss a reasonable timeframe for the transition.

Peer Support Team Leaders may arrange time for check-ins with their peer support team members on an annual basis to reaffirm commitment and determine ongoing training and development needs. Peer Support Team Leaders are responsible for identifying and discussing a team members' transition off of the team if a performance or commitment deficit has been observed.

Peer Support Team Leaders who require, or are considering, a transition off of the team are to speak with their supervising Ministry Work Unit Manager regarding a reasonable timeframe for the transition.

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## 7. Peer Support Programming in the Government of Saskatchewan

Peer Support Programming in the Government of Saskatchewan follows a tiered approach. General information regarding Peer Support Teams is available in the Government of Saskatchewan's Critical Incident Stress Management Guidelines. The Appendix: Peer Support Team Selection Criteria and Training for Executive Government provides guidance for ministry work units that are considering the implementation of Peer Support Teams. The Peer Support Toolkit provides forms, checklists and templates to assist with the creation, implementation and management of a Peer Support team.



**Professional support is available.  
For emergencies call 9-1-1.**

Contact LifeWorks for critical incident response information – the Care Access Centre is available 24/7 at **1-844-880-9142**.

Visit the **Employee and Family Assistance Program** Taskroom page for more information.

