

# FIRE COMMISSION

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## RESOLUTION 2018-02

### Peer Support Services/ Unit Resolution

**Author: Commissioner Joe Alioto Veronese**

**WHEREAS**, Members of the San Francisco Fire Department frequently respond to traumatic incidents and dangerous circumstances, including, but not limited to, fires, stabbings, shootings, domestic violence, terrorist acts, riots, automobile accidents, airplane crashes, and earthquakes. They are exposed to harmful substances, such as blood, urine, and vomit. They witness grave injuries, death, and grief. They are frequently placed in harm's way, with significant risk of bodily harm or physical assault while performing the duties of their jobs.

**WHEREAS**, the traumatic and unpredictable nature of emergency services results in a high-stress working environment that can take an overwhelming mental, emotional, and physical toll on personnel. Chronic exposure to traumatic events and critical incidents increases the risk for post-traumatic stress and other stress-induced symptoms.

**WHEREAS**, while most emergency service personnel survive the traumas of their jobs, sadly, many experience the impacts of occupational stressors when off duty. The psychological and emotional stress of their professions can have a detrimental impact long after their shift is over.

**WHEREAS**, such trauma-related injuries can become overwhelming, manifesting in post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, and even, tragically, suicide. The fire service, as an example, is four times more likely to experience a suicide than a "traditional" death in the line of duty in any year.

**WHEREAS**, similar to military personnel, first responders face unique and uniquely dangerous risks in their mission to keep the public safe. These professionals rely on each other for survival while placing their lives on the line every day to protect the communities they serve.

**WHEREAS**, the culture of emergency services has often inhibited its personnel from asking for assistance in battling their psychological stress for fear it will cause ridicule, shame, or adverse job action.

**WHEREAS**, the San Francisco Fire Department has a responsibility to ensure that its members are equipped with the tools necessary for assisting members in mitigating the occupational stress that they incur as a result of performing their job duties.

**WHEREAS**, the intent of the San Francisco Fire Commission in enacting this resolution is to identify best practices for a state of the art Peer Support Program for the members of the San Francisco Fire Department.

**RESOLVED, by a majority vote, the San Francisco Fire Commission finds as follows:**

Within 120 days of the adoption of this resolution the Chief of the Department shall deliver to the Commission for consideration a memorandum setting forth minimum standards for a state of the art Peer Support Unit/ Services\*.

\*The memorandum should demonstrate that the Chief of the Department has considered the following, or in the alternative, an explanation: required personnel, budget, training, certifications, the elements of a peer support program, the protocols for response, debriefing process, attendance, locations of debriefings, follow-up, the identification of external and internal mental health resources, the identification of on-scene resources, the organizational chart of the peer support unit, any protocols to minimize the exposure of traumatic events to the extent possible, internal and external mental health benefits, the elements of an internal campaign to de-stigmatize post-traumatic stress injuries, peer support privileges/confidentiality and any other elements deemed appropriate by the existing Stress Unit leadership.

**RESOLVED FURTHER**, within 180 days of the adoption of this resolution the Chief of the Department shall deliver to the Commission for consideration a memorandum setting forth a plan of action for implementation of a state of the art Peer Support Unit/Services, as previously identified herein.

Adopted at the Regular Meeting of the San Francisco Fire Commission on October 24, 2108

Ayes: 4 (Cleaveland, Hardeman, Covington, Alioto-Veronese)

Nays: 0

  
Maureen Conefrey, Fire Commission Secretary