



# POLICY AND PROCEDURE

# NO.120

## Stress Program

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Recognizing that an employee's ability to effectively carry out his/her job responsibilities can be impaired by personal problems that may or may not be job-related and that this problem may be aggravated by the employee's reluctance to seek outside assistance or perception that no such assistance is available, the Worcester Police Department instituted a departmental stress unit. While initially established for police officers, the program is available for all employees, sworn and civilian.

### **PROGRAM:**

The concept of this program is to provide Police Department employees with "objective and non-judgmental" resources to which they can go voluntarily for advice and assistance in working out personal problems.

The problems with which the program is primarily concerned are job-related ones that may decrease the employee's effectiveness. Those problems will command the highest priorities of the staff members and the greatest share of their time. However, no employee who sincerely seeks assistance with any personal problem will be turned away, regardless of the nature or magnitude of the problem. In fact, a major goal of the program is to help the employee learn to handle his/her personal problems before he loses his job, his family, or both.

The program is staffed entirely by Worcester Police personnel, all of whom receive special training in counseling techniques and many of whom have personally experienced the kinds of problems the program addresses. The staff will have a number of capabilities upon which it may draw to help a fellow worker who is seeking assistance. A list of peer counselors with their phone numbers is available to each commander and will be posted throughout the department. The list shall be kept current at all times.

### **SELECTION OF PROGRAM'S CLIENTS:**

Counseling services both at the peer and professional levels shall be made available to the troubled employee in the following manner:

1. Employee may voluntarily seek advice and/or guidance from the Stress Unit Coordinator and/or the peer counselor.
2. Employee's peers shall encourage troubled employee to utilize the available services.
3. Employee may be initially referred to peer counselors and/or Stress Coordinator in lieu of disciplinary action for certain infractions of the rules and regulations of the Worcester Police STRESS PROGRAM Department. Upon the successful completion of the program and the recommendations of the Stress Unit Coordinator/peer counselors, the employee shall be returned to full duty at no loss of pay or disciplinary actions.

4. Non-referral System: Employee may choose to seek professional assistance on his own initiative. Upon request, the Stress Unit will provide information concerning referrals and insurance coverage.

The key to the program is the desire of the employee to participate.

The initial and continued involvement of the employee will be his/her decision, and no one will be compelled to participate.

### **ALCOHOLISM:**

Alcoholism is a disease and the alcoholic is a sick person requiring skilled rehabilitative assistance. Early recognition of the troubled employee is a proper function of management. Once recognized, every reasonable effort should be made to encourage and assist the employee toward recovery. Each troubled officer shall be encouraged to seek adequate medical advice and counseling without delay. Support and assistance will be afforded by the department through the Stress Unit to any employee, who cooperates and displays a sincere rehabilitation effort. An individual's job security or opportunity for advancement will not be jeopardized by cooperating with the unit.

All interaction between the employee and the Stress Unit will be strictly confidential. Problem drinking will be considered to exist for the individual when his/her duty performance is materially reduced in efficiency and dependability because of his drinking, when such drinking is not an isolated experience but is repetitive, and when such drinking results in recognizable interference with health or personal relations.

Each supervisor will be responsible for the early detection of problem drinking on the part of any member of his/her command and for prompt referral for rehabilitative assistance.

Our primary purpose is to rehabilitate the alcoholic to the status of a sober, reliable, productive employee, thus retaining his skills, training and experience.

If any member is found to need treatment requiring temporary residence at a treatment facility, he/she will utilize accumulated sick time or other available accrued time (furlough, administration days, and personal days). In the absence of such available time, other adjustments will be considered in consultation with the program Director. Every effort will be made to insure that members will not lose pay or benefits. Case decisions will be made by case number rather than name. Following a residency treatment, the employee will be encouraged to participate in additional services of the Stress Unit.

### **FIREARMS INCIDENTS:**

In the event that any officer is involved in a shooting incident, either being shot or in the event that he shoots someone else, his unit commander will immediately notify the coordinator of the stress unit. The coordinator of the stress unit will initiate immediate services for both the officer and his direct family members.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT DE-ESCALATION BRIEF:**

Whenever an officer(s) is involved in a traumatic incident, whether on duty or off, it is incumbent upon the officer's commanding officer or designee to notify the stress officer as soon as possible in order to evaluate whether the officer(s) involved may need counseling or additional services.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

1. Referrals made to the Stress Program by any concerned person will prompt the staff to discreetly and tactfully make itself available to the individual needing assistance. The individual's initial and continued participation, in the program however, must be strictly voluntary.
2. The Coordinator of the Stress Program will keep only those records of participation that are essential to the orderly administration of the program and will see that all records and files are kept secure and confidential at all times.
3. The record of an employee's participation in the program will be absolutely restricted to himself, his counselor and/or the Program Coordinator. Neither the Coordinator nor any counselor will discuss with any person the fact of, nor any aspect of, an individual's participation unless specifically requested to do so in writing by the participant. The Department will not have access to the records of employee participation, nor will any member of the staff provide the department with information regarding such participation, unless the participant himself requests such a disclosure.
4. Information given by employees participating in the program will, for department administrative proceedings, be considered privileged. Counselors will not be called by the department to testify at administrative proceedings against members of the department under their care. Records of counseling will be treated by the department as privileged information and no information given to counselors can be made available for use in administrative or disciplinary proceedings.

Per:



*Steven M. Sargent*  
Chief of Police

\*\*Critical Incident De-escalation brief added 2/28/19