

Wellness Program

1034.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on establishing and maintaining a proactive wellness program for department members (2025 Montana Laws, HB 621, § 1).

The wellness program is intended to be a holistic approach to a member's well-being and encompasses aspects such as physical fitness, mental health, and overall wellness.

1034.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Critical incident – An event or situation that may cause a strong emotional, cognitive, or physical reaction that has the potential to interfere with daily life.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) (also known as a group debrief) – A standardized approach using a discussion format to provide education, support, and emotional release opportunities for members involved in work-related critical incidents.

Peer support team – Peers trained to provide mental and emotional wellness support to help members cope with critical incidents and certain personal or professional problems.

1034.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Bozeman Police Department to prioritize member wellness to maintain fitness for duty and support a healthy quality of life for its members. The Department will maintain a wellness program that supports its members with proactive wellness resources, critical incident response, and follow-up support.

1034.3 WELLNESS REPRESENTATIVE

The Chief of Police, or designee, may appoint a wellness representative from the Department to participate on the public safety wellness team. The Department's representative(s) will collaborate with the Human Resources Department and the Bozeman Fire Department to identify opportunities to improve the overall wellness of both public safety departments and to assist with the following:

- (a) Identifying wellness support providers (e.g., licensed psychotherapists, external peer support providers, physical therapists, dietitians, physical fitness trainers holding accredited certifications).
 1. As appropriate, selected providers should be trained and experienced in providing mental wellness support and counseling to public safety personnel.
 2. When practicable, the Department should not use the same licensed psychotherapist for both member wellness support and fitness for duty evaluations.
- (b) Developing management and operational procedures for department peer support members, such as:

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1. Peer support member selection and retention.
 2. Training and applicable certification requirements.
 3. Deployment.
 4. Managing potential conflicts between peer support members and those seeking service, including supervisor/subordinate conflicts (2025 Montana Laws, HB 621, § 1).
 5. Monitoring and mitigating peer support member emotional fatigue (i.e., compassion fatigue) associated with providing peer support.
 6. Using qualified peer support personnel from other public safety agencies or outside organizations for department peer support, as appropriate.
- (c) Verifying members have reasonable access to peer support or licensed psychotherapist support.
- (d) Establishing procedures for CISDs, including:
1. Defining the types of incidents that may initiate debriefings.
 2. Steps for organizing debriefings.
- (e) Facilitating the delivery of wellness information, training, and support through various methods appropriate for the situation (e.g., phone hotlines, electronic applications).
- (f) Verifying a confidential, appropriate, and timely Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for members. This also includes:
1. Obtaining a written description of the program services.
 2. Providing for the methods to obtain program services.
 3. Providing referrals to the EAP for appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up resources.
 4. Obtaining written procedures and guidelines for referrals to, or mandatory participation in, the program.
 5. Obtaining training for supervisors in their role and responsibilities, and identification of member behaviors that would indicate the existence of member concerns, problems, or issues that could impact member job performance.
- (g) Assisting members who have become disabled with application for federal government benefits such as those offered through the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (34 USC § 10281 et seq.).
1. The coordinator should work with appropriate Department liaisons to assist qualified members and survivors with benefits, wellness support, and counseling services, as applicable, when there has been a member death (see the Line-of-Duty Deaths Policy for additional guidance).

Management and operational procedures developed and recommended by the wellness representative must be approved in advance by the Chief of Police, or designee. Wellness

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representatives are appointed at the discretion of the Chief of Police and may be modified at any time, with or without notice.

1034.4 DEPARTMENT PEER SUPPORT

1034.4.1 PEER SUPPORT MEMBER SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of a department peer support member will be at the discretion of the coordinator. Selection should be based on the member's:

- Desire to be a peer support member.
- Experience or tenure.
- Demonstrated ability as a positive role model.
- Ability to communicate and interact effectively.
- Evaluation by supervisors and any current peer support members.

1034.4.2 PEER SUPPORT MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of department peer support members include:

- (a) Providing pre- and post-critical incident support.
- (b) Presenting department members with periodic training on wellness topics, including but not limited to:
 1. Stress management.
 2. Suicide prevention.
 3. How to access support resources.
- (c) Providing referrals to licensed psychotherapists and other resources, where appropriate.
 1. Referrals should be made to department-designated resources in situations that are beyond the scope of the peer support member's training.

1034.4.3 PEER SUPPORT MEMBER TRAINING

A department peer support member should complete department-approved training prior to being assigned. Initial and refresher training shall address topics covered in this policy and peer support member compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements (2025 Montana Laws, HB 621, § 1).

1034.5 CRITICAL INCIDENT WELLNESS LEAVE WITH PAY

The Department recognizes that exposing members to certain critical incidents may create a risk of serious harm to the member's health or welfare and may endanger or negatively impact their mental and/or physical well-being. Critical incidents that meet these criteria include, but are not limited to:

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- (a) Visually witnessing the death or maiming or immediate aftermath of such a death or maiming of one or more human beings, including an officer;
- (b) Responding to or being directly involved in the life-saving efforts of a child;
- (c) Requiring rescue in the line of duty where one's life was endangered;
- (d) Using deadly force or being subjected to deadly force in the line of duty regardless of whether an officer was physically injured;
- (e) Witnessing the aftermath of the death or serious bodily injury of a child;
- (f) Other situations, as determined by the Chief of Police, or designee, as meeting this criteria.

Any member involved in these, or similar types of critical incidents should be offered critical incident wellness leave with pay for the remainder of their shift by the appropriate Sergeant or command staff member. Members are highly encouraged to utilize this leave to focus on their own well-being.

Additional hours of paid critical incident wellness leave may be provided at the discretion of the Chief of Police, or designee, in consultation with the involved officer.

Any member involved in a critical incident meeting the criteria outlined above is highly encouraged to meet with a licensed mental health professional at the following intervals:

- (a) Before returning to duty from critical incident leave or the nearest possible date after returning to duty.
- (b) At consistent intervals following the incident, as needed.

Members are encouraged to utilize the mental health resources provided through programs offered by the City of Bozeman and as outlined in the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Additionally, at the discretion of the Chief of Police, or designee, and subject to budgetary approval, the Department may consider paying for mental health resources when alternative programs are not accessible.

1034.5.1 IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO PROVIDERS AFTER CRITICAL INCIDENTS

The Department will assist in identifying providers so members may have immediate access to a mental health professional after certain critical incidents, including officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths.

1034.6 CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFINGS

When deemed appropriate, a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing should occur as soon as practicable following a critical incident. The wellness representative is responsible for organizing the debriefing. The purpose of the debriefing is to help mitigate the stress-related effects of a critical incident, therefore notes and recorded statements will not be taken.

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The debriefing is not part of any investigative process. Care should be taken not to release or repeat any communication made during a debriefing unless otherwise authorized by policy, law, or a valid court order.

Attendance at the debriefing should only include critical incident stress management team members and those directly involved in the incident.

1034.6.1 CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Communications with a critical incident stress management team member are generally confidential and may not be disclosed to a third party or in a criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding without a court order or as authorized by § 39-74-105, MCA. A critical stress management team member is an individual specially trained to provide critical incident stress management and response services as a member of an organized team or of this department (§ 39-74-104, MCA).

1034.7 PEER SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS

Communications with peer support members during peer support sessions are confidential, except in the following circumstances (2025 Montana Laws, HB 621, § 1):

- (a) The member discloses the commission of a crime or plans to commit a crime
- (b) The member discloses the intent to harm themselves or others
- (c) An applicable licensing board or program requests disclosure of the communications
- (d) The communications trigger the mandatory reporting requirements of licensing boards or programs

Participants shall not keep notes of peer support sessions, and the sessions shall not be audio or video-recorded (2025 Montana Laws, HB 621, § 1).

1034.8 PHYSICAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

The Department recognizes the importance of having members maintain a high level of physical fitness and encourages members to take advantage of the following:

- (a) Department-provided physical fitness facilities and equipment
- (b) City-provided discounts to additional physical fitness facilities and programs
- (c) No-cost health screenings provided by the City's health insurance plan
- (d) Physical fitness time while on duty, in accordance with department policy and/or the applicable collective bargaining agreement
- (e) Fitness incentive programs, as further described in the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

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1034.9 TRAINING

The wellness representative should collaborate with the public safety wellness team and the department Training Sergeant to provide all members with regular education and training on topics related to member wellness, including but not limited to:

- The availability and range of department wellness support systems.
- Suicide prevention.
- Recognizing and managing mental distress, emotional fatigue, post-traumatic stress, and other possible reactions to trauma.
- Alcohol and substance disorder awareness.
- Countering sleep deprivation and physical fatigue.
- Anger management.
- Marriage and family wellness.
- Benefits of exercise and proper nutrition.
- Effective time and personal financial management skills.

Training materials, curriculum, and attendance records should be forwarded to the Training Sergeant as appropriate for inclusion in training records.