

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

I. PURPOSE

To provide employees with professional psychological counseling for either job-related problems or problems that may affect job performance.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of the TFD, according to the guidelines below.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the District to make psychological counseling available to employees and their eligible dependents through the District provided group health insurance. Additionally, assistance is available to employees for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and/or traumatic events counseling following incidents which may have caused excess stress or trauma to the employee.

IV. GUIDELINES

General Employee Counseling

- A. Employees who participate in the District-sponsored health insurance plan may be eligible for professional psychological counseling. Employees and/or dependents may contact the health insurance provider directly to schedule an appointment.
- B. In the event that an employee or his eligible dependent chooses to use the counseling services provided through the health insurance, he shall be required to pay the corresponding co-payments. If the employee chooses to use the services, the employee shall not be compensated for the time spent in the sessions.
- C. In the event that a supervisor believes an employee should be sent for counseling, the supervisor shall notify the Fire Chief of the situation to receive further direction with regard to obtaining approval from the District. The employee shall be required to attend counseling session(s), any out-of-pocket costs shall be covered by the District. In such a situation where the employee is required to attend counseling sessions, the employee shall be compensated for the time required to attend the sessions.
- D. Confidentiality in supervisory referrals is imperative. The supervisor shall refrain from discussing the situation with anyone except the Fire Chief and his designated representative.

Critical Incident Stress Management

- E. Any employee of the District may contact the Fire Chief if the employee believes a debriefing is necessary following an incident. The Fire Chief or his designated representative shall coordinate with the appropriate provider to schedule the session.
- F. If a critical incident stress debriefing is held, all matters discussed within the session shall be confidential. Any employee who participates in a debriefing session is required to adhere to the confidentiality standard set forth.

Traumatic Events Counseling (as per A.R.S. 38-673)

G. In the event that any emergency response employee is exposed to one of the following events while in the course of duty, he shall be entitled to up to 12 visits of licensed counseling with a ~~psychiatrist~~ or psychologist licensed mental health professional (as defined in Guideline H below), the cost of which shall be borne by the District:

1. Witnessing the death of another peace officer or emergency responder while engaged in the line of duty;
2. Witnessing the death or maiming or visually witnessing the immediate aftermath of such death or maiming of a human being.
3. Responding to or being directly involved in a criminal investigation of a dangerous crime against a child punishable under A.R.S. 13-705.
4. Requiring rescue in the line of duty when one's life was endangered.
5. Responding to or being directly involved in an investigation regarding the drowning or near drowning of a child.
6. Using deadly force or being subjected to deadly force in the line of duty, regardless of whether the employee is physically injured.

H. The employee shall be allowed the opportunity to select his own ~~psychiatrist or psychologist~~ mental health professional who specializes in trauma and crisis, who uses evidence-based treatment options and who is one of the following:

1. A psychiatrist who is licensed pursuant to Title 32, Chapter 13 or 17;
2. A psychologist who is licensed pursuant to Title 32, Chapter 19.1;
3. A mental health professional who is licensed pursuant to Title 32, Chapter 33 and who holds either a Master's or Doctoral degree related to the mental health profession;
4. A mental health nurse practitioner or a psychiatric clinical nurse specialist who is licensed pursuant to Title 32, Chapter 15;
5. A physician's assistant who is licensed pursuant to Title 32, Chapter 25.

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H.I. The District shall pay no less than the schedule of fees outlined from the Industrial Commission for mental health visits.

I.J. Time in attendance at the traumatic events counseling shall be considered compensable and the employee shall not be required to use his earned leave time.

J.K. In the event that the licensed ~~psychiatrist or psychologist~~ mental health professional determines that the employee is in need of additional counseling visits, the employee may be entitled to up to an additional 24 visits within one year after the first visit.

K.L. In the event that the licensed psychologist or psychiatrist determines that the employee is not fit for duty while the employee is receiving treatment pursuant to the traumatic event, the District shall ensure that the employee has no loss of pay and benefits for up to 30 calendar days per incident after the licensed mental health professional determines that the employee is not fit for duty if all the following apply:

1. If the employee is unable to work light duty or the District does not have a light duty option,
2. The employee has exhausted his paid leave,
3. If the employee does not have short-term disability benefits,

L.M. Participation in the traumatic events counseling that is paid by the District does not create a presumption that a related claim is compensable under Workers' Compensation.

M.N. In the event that any TFD emergency response employee is exposed to one of the events noted in Guideline G above, the employee shall notify the Fire Chief of a need for the traumatic events counseling; the Fire Chief shall take the necessary steps to ensure that appropriate assistance is provided to the employee to secure such counseling.

N.O. The District shall ensure compliance with all necessary provisions of state statute regarding traumatic events counseling.