
PEER SUPPORT OFFICER

POLICY NO. A12

A large graphic with a blue and green gradient background. A light blue rounded rectangle is positioned in the upper left, containing the text "ACT CORRECTIVE SERVICES". The background is divided into several geometric shapes by thin white lines.

ACT CORRECTIVE SERVICES



ACT
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Justice and Community Safety

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1 PURPOSE

ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) is committed to ensuring that all staff are appropriately supported in multiple ways, including by having a Peer Support Officer program. A Peer Support Officer is a member of ACTCS staff who volunteers to provide a supportive presence and information on available support services to colleagues regarding employment, personal or work-related stress and difficulties. This program is designed to provide structure and support to those staff who volunteer as Peer Support Officers to ensure they are supported and protected in fulfilling this role.

This policy provides the parameters for the staff Peer Support program.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all ACTCS staff.

3 DEFINITIONS

Peer Support Officer	An ACTCS staff member who has been approved by the People and Culture Unit to provide informal and flexible support to their colleagues regarding incidents, employment and personal difficulties and who performs this role in a voluntary capacity. Only staff who have been accepted into the program and who undertake mandatory training and supervision are considered to be Peer Support Officers.
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Supervision Counsellor	An external provider authorised by the Commissioner to provide supervision and other support to the Peer Support program in accordance with any written arrangements.
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4 PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 ACTCS is committed to providing a supportive framework for Peer Support Officers to protect the wellbeing of those staff who choose to volunteer in this role.
- 4.2 ACTCS recognises that a peer support program is a valuable way of providing informal and flexible support to staff.
- 4.3 The use of the Peer Support Officer program is not intended to replace the services or advice of medical professionals, mental health professionals, human resource professionals, union officials, or legal professionals.

- 4.4 The Peer Support Officer program is designed to ensure that staff who become Peer Support Officers are provided training, support, and guidance to succeed in this role.
- 4.5 Reporting requirements exist to provide oversight of how much support is being provided by Peer Support Officers to ensure they are not overburdened.
- 4.6 Reporting provides feedback to the Commissioner on common issues affecting staff.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEER SUPPORT OFFICERS

- 5.1 Peer Support Officers:
 - a. do not have additional authority or privileges or delegations beyond their normal duties
 - a. continue to report through their normal line manager for non-peer support officer related matters and
 - b. report to and through the Director Wellbeing and Rosters or the Senior Director, People and Culture for peer support related matters.
- 5.2 Peer Support Officers must abide by this policy and the Peer Support Officer Code of Conduct ([*Annex A – Peer Support Officer Handbook*](#)).

6 SUPPORT OFFERED BY PEER SUPPORT OFFICERS

- 6.1 Peer Support Officers offer the following support:
 - a. listening and offering a supportive presence to individual staff members in an informal setting either at the workplace or after hours
 - b. providing information about and referrals to support services including what these services are and how to contact them.
- 6.2 For workplace relation concerns, Peer Support Officers will encourage staff members to contact their line manager in the first instance, followed by ACTCS People and Culture team, People and Workplace Strategy or the relevant Union or Union Delegate in accordance with the [*ACTPS Union Encouragement Policy*](#).

7 ACCESS TO PEER SUPPORT OFFICERS

- 7.1 Staff can access a Peer Support Officer:
 - a. through direct contact or
 - b. the Wellbeing team or

- c. by contacting People and Culture to request support.
- 7.2 The Wellbeing team will ensure a current list of Peer Support Officers is made available to staff and maintain a current list on the ACTCS Intranet.
- 7.3 Peer Support Officers may on their own initiative contact a staff member for a welfare check.
- 7.4 Peer Support Officers should only be contacted by other staff seeking support during business hours for 2 Constitution Avenue (2CA) or during their work shift for Court Transport Unit (CTU) and Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) unless they have permission from the Peer Support Officer to contact them outside of these hours.
- 7.5 Peer Support Officers may be requested to provide support after hours to staff by the Duty Manager, Officer-in-Charge (OIC) or Incident Commander (IC) at the AMC or the CTU, and by a Team Leader for staff at 2CA (*Debriefing Policy*).
- 7.6 Where Peer Support Officers attend AMC or CTU at the request of a Duty Manager or OIC or Incident Commander, they must report their attendance to the Master Control Room (MCR) on arrival.
- 7.7 When Peer Support Officers are directed to provide support after hours in the situation described in section 7.5, they must be paid overtime for the hours worked in that capacity.
- 7.8 If a Peer Support Officer is covered by the *Correctional Officers Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021*, then the overtime and on call remunerations rates in that Agreement will apply.
- 7.9 If Peer Support Officers are covered by the *ACT Public Sector Administrative and Related Classifications Enterprise Agreement 2021-2022*, then that Agreement's overtime rates, or flex time will apply.

8 INCIDENT INVOLVEMENT BY PEER SUPPORT OFFICER

- 8.1 During an incident, Peer Support Officers not already on site are only to attend any designated ACTCS workplace when requested by the Duty Manager, OIC or IC.
- 8.2 If a Peer Support Officer is rostered on during an incident, they may take on the function of a Peer Support Officer as requested by the Duty Manager, OIC or IC. Their function as a Peer Support Officer should not impact operational need.
- 8.3 Peer Support Officers are to be informed of a critical incident after it takes place, so they are aware when or if any staff seek support. The Director, Wellbeing or the

Wellbeing Coordinator will coordinate the process of informing Peer Support Officers after an incident.

- 8.4 The OIC, IC, or Duty Manager should consider the possible impact on staff from the incident and call in Peer Support Officers to assist.
- 8.5 In the event of a major or serious event, such as injury or death on site, a major incident/disruption, or it is evident that officer(s) involved are clearly impacted by the incident, onsite support from the Converge Critical Incident Rapid Response (CI RR) team (1300 687 327) should be sought immediately. Peer Support Officers who are not involved with the incident should be informed and made available to provide support to impacted staff until onsite incident response arrives.
- 8.6 Peer Support Officers who are onsite at the time of a Critical Incident Rapid Response team attendance, should be debriefed by the Clinician. Those Peer Support Officers not onsite who provided support may be debriefed by phone/telehealth.
- 8.7 If a Peer Support Officer was involved in responding to the major or serious event as a part of their operational duties, they should not be burdened with support duties.
- 8.8 The Director of Wellbeing and Rostering or Wellbeing Coordinator will maintain a list of available Peer Support Officers who may be called upon to provide support monthly. These officers will not be on call but if they are asked to respond and agree, they will be remunerated for after-hours time spent in their capacity as a Peer Support Officer.
- 8.9 In the event multiple Peer Support Officers are required to provide support, this must be coordinated by either the Director of Wellbeing and Rostering or the Wellbeing Coordinator. If there are multiple supports required, the contact list must be split between the Peer Support Officers.

9 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE

- 9.1 Staff members' conversations with Peer Support Officers are confidential except for when the information must be disclosed based on conditions under 9.3.
- 9.2 Notes and reports on Peer Support Officer sessions must be de-identified to ensure confidentiality.
- 9.3 Peer Support Officers must disclose information that:
 - a. identifies a clear and immediate danger to a person or persons or

- b. reveals child abuse or reason to believe child abuse is occurring (ACTPS Reportable Conduct Policy).
- 9.4 If a staff member reveals information to a Peer Support Officer that identifies a clear and immediate danger to a person, then the Peer Support Officer must inform that colleague that they are obliged to disclose this information.
- 9.5 If a staff member reveals information to a Peer Support Officer that reveals information that would be reportable under the ACTPS Reportable Conduct Policy, then the Peer Support Officer is not required to inform the staff member.
- 9.6 If a Peer Support Officer has genuine concerns outside of required reporting obligations, they must discuss these concerns with the staff member.
- 9.7 The Peer Support Officer Handbook provides further guidance on circumstances requiring disclosure.

10 TRAINING

- 10.1 Peer Support Officers must complete Mental Health First Aid training within three months of commencing in the role as a Peer Support Officer and undertake a Supervision Counsellor session with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) health professional. Training is coordinated through the Wellbeing Coordinator.
- 10.2 Following successful completion of the training under section 10.1, the staff member will receive a certificate of completion confirming their appointment as a Peer Support Officer.
- 10.3 Additional mandatory training must be completed when provided throughout the period of appointment as Peer Support Officers.

11 SUPERVISION

- 11.1 Regular supervision will be provided to Peer Support Officers to ensure that participants are supported in this role through a Supervision Counsellor.
- 11.2 A Supervision Counsellor provides a safe reflective space where Peer Support Officers will learn to manage the risks of vicarious trauma, participate in skills development, and be provided with guidance on balancing these obligations with their work duties.
- 11.3 Peer Support Officers must attend appointments with the Supervision Counsellor in accordance with any arrangements authorised by their Divisional Executive (Annex B – Supervision Guidelines).

- 11.4 Appointments with the Supervision Counsellor will be conducted during a Peer Support Officer's normal duty period.
- 11.5 The Supervision Counsellor will maintain a record of appointments for all Peer Support Officers. The session details are confidential. Confirmation of attendance will be shared with the Wellbeing Coordinator.
- 11.6 If a Peer Support Officer does not participate in consecutive scheduled appointments with the Supervision Counsellor over a six (6) month period, the Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services may suspend them from acting in this role until they complete their supervision sessions.
- 11.7 The People and Culture Unit will inform a Peer Support Officer in writing of any temporary suspension under this section.
- 11.8 At any time, a Peer Support Officer may contact fellow Peer Support Officers, the People and Culture Unit, the Director Wellbeing, the Wellbeing Coordinator, their Supervision Counsellor, the Employment Assistance Program (EAP) or their Divisional Executive for support or guidance.

12 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 12.1 Peer Support Officers must maintain accurate records reflecting their time dedicated to fulfilling this role.
- 12.2 Records must not record staff names or identifying details but must broadly identify the topic for which peer support is sought.
- 12.3 Peer Support Officers must submit their Peer Support Officer Monthly Report to ACTCSWellbeing@act.gov.au by close of business on the last Monday of each month.
- 12.4 The Peer Support Officer Monthly Report should also include any systemic issues identified for quality improvement action.
- 12.5 The People and Culture Unit must provide a monthly report of the program to the Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services by close of business on the fourth working day of the month, relating to the previous month.
- 12.6 The Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services must raise with the Commissioner specific issues and concerns from these monthly reports.

13 BALANCING OBLIGATIONS

- 13.1 A Peer Support Officer must be able to balance their work duties with providing peer support to colleagues.
- 13.2 If a Peer Support Officer does not have the ability to provide peer support to a colleague during their current work shift, they can negotiate with the colleague a suitable time.
- 13.3 Where a Peer Support Officer is assisting a colleague under the direction of their Duty Manager or Team Leader during their work shift, they must provide support as far as practicable and with regard to operational requirements.
- 13.4 Where the provision of peer support may impact on operational duties, a Peer Support Officer must immediately report this to their line manager and seek approval to provide the support requested. The line manager must make alternative operational arrangements, where practicable, to allow the Peer Support Officer to provide the requested support.

14 APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

- 14.1 The Commissioner will periodically invite staff to apply to participate in the Peer Support program.
- 14.2 Staff must submit a completed *A12.F1: Peer Support Officer Application Form* to the People and Culture Unit and nominate two (2) colleagues as referees and their line manager as being available to support the applicant's nomination.
- 14.3 On receipt of the form and nominees, the People and Culture Unit will collate the submissions and provide to the Senior Director, People and Culture.
- 14.4 To continue as a Peer Support Officer once the initial term is complete, the staff member does not need to re-apply but must nominate two colleagues and their line manager to be available to provide a referee report to the People and Culture Unit.
- 14.5 The Director Wellbeing and Rosters can approach a person to be considered for a role as a Peer Support Officer. In this instance, the Senior Director, People and Culture must consider and endorse the person's nomination.

Assessment

- 14.6 The People and Culture Unit delegate will meet with the staff member to discuss their application and provide a recommendation to the Executive Branch Manager,

Corporate Services, on the staff member's suitability to participate or continue in the program.

- 14.7 The Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services will review all information under this section and approve or reject the staff member's application.
- 14.8 Staff will be informed in writing of the outcome of their application.

Review

- 14.9 The People and Culture Unit will review the progress of peer support officers:
 - a. three (3) months from appointment and
 - b. at intervals of no more than annually thereafter.
- 14.10 Where there are concerns about a Peer Support Officer's performance in the role, a recommendation will be provided to the Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services.
- 14.11 Peer Support Officers must be given the opportunity to respond to concerns about their performance and to receive additional support if needed.
- 14.12 The Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services, may:
 - a. request additional supervision
 - b. approve a Peer Support Officer to continue in the role
 - c. suspend the Peer Support Officer
 - d. cease their registration as a Peer Support Officer or
 - e. permanently remove them from holding the Peer Support Officer title.
- 14.13 A Peer Support Officer will be informed in writing of the outcome of the review.

15 WITHDRAWAL

- 15.1 Peer support officers can temporarily or permanently withdraw from the Peer Support program at any time and for any reason.
- 15.2 Peer Support Officers must inform the People and Culture Unit of the temporary or permanent nature of the withdrawal.
- 15.3 Where a Peer Support Officer withdraws from the program for less than one (1) year, they will be required to participate in one (1) supervision session prior to recommencing the role.
- 15.4 Where a Peer Support Officer withdraws from the program for one (1) year or more, they will be required to undertake:
 - a. refresher training prior to recommencing and
 - b. supervision with the EAP Supervision Counsellor.





16 CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

- 16.1 Where a staff member has concerns or wishes to make a complaint about a Peer Support Officer, they should refer their complaint in writing to the People and Culture Unit for review and a response.
- 16.2 Any breach or suspected breach of the *Peer Support Officer Code of Conduct* should be immediately referred to the People and Culture Unit (*Annex A – Peer Support Officer Handbook*, see also *Ethical Conduct Policy*).
- 16.3 Where a complaint has been received under sections 16.1-16.2, Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services may temporarily suspend the Peer Support Officer from acting in their role until the complaint has been finalised.

17 COMMUNICATIONS

- 17.1 All communications distributed on behalf of the Peer Support Network or in an individual's capacity as a Peer Support Officer requires approval from the Senior Director, People and Culture or delegate, including Director Wellbeing and Rosters and Director People and Culture. The Senior Director, People and Culture may seek further approval as appropriate from:
- a. Executive Branch Manager, Corporate Services
 - b. Deputy Commissioner Custodial Operations
 - c. ACT Corrective Services Commissioner
 - d. any other relevant senior manager.

18 RELATED DOCUMENTS

-  [Annex A - ACTCS Peer Support Officer Handbook 2020.pdf](#)
-  [Annex B - Supervision Guidelines.pdf](#)
-  [A12.F1 Peer Support Officer Application Form.DOCX](#)
-  [A12.F2 Peer Support Officer Referee Form.DOCX](#)
- [Ethical Conduct Policy](#)
- [Debriefing Policy](#)
- [Emergency Management Policy](#)

Ray Johnson APM
Commissioner
ACT Corrective Services
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