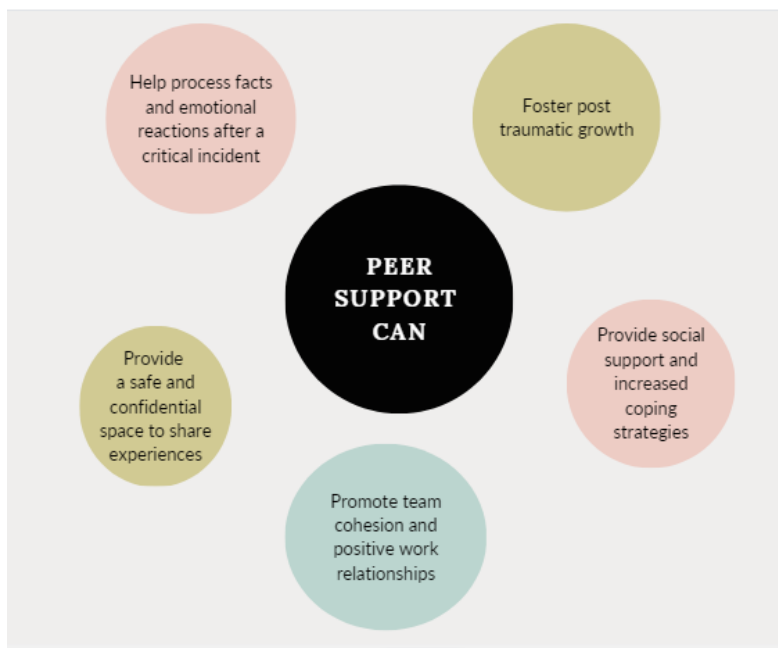




## Benefits of Public Safety Peer Support Programs

Peer support programs provide multiple benefits for public safety employees in “professions in which people typically have not talked much about their feelings about their work, particularly their distress”.<sup>i</sup> Evidence-informed research shows that peer support programs have positive benefits for public safety employees and can normalize mental health challenges, promote socialization, and reduce feelings of isolation and alienation. Having a trusted peer to confide in fosters hope and recovery and helps responders learn improved stress management techniques, coping skills, and address the issues of cumulative stress.

“*The Value of Peer Support for First Responders*” outlines the positive benefits of peer support programs. Studies that have investigated the benefits of peer support have found that peer support can help in many areas (see box below).<sup>ii</sup>



Well-designed peer support programs can enhance coping skills, improve resilience, and create opportunities for employee engagement, promoting a better understanding of mental health issues and services within an organization. Establishing a peer support program can enhance recruitment and retention efforts as a part of an overall wellness program for employees.

Peer support programs can also result in a financial cost benefit for the agency. When trained and experienced first responders are unable to work due to mental health

issues, a financial burden is placed on departmental budgets. Additionally, the cost of replacing lost members with new members involves initial certification training and probationary time. There is a cost savings in having a healthy, fully functioning workforce.

<sup>i</sup> 2018, May “First Responders: Behavioral Health Concerns, Emergency Response, and Trauma” SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center Supplemental Research Bulletin

<sup>ii</sup> Haslem, Heather (2022, January) “The Value of Peer Support for First Responders” CASAT OnDemand