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**Document Title:           Assessment of the Law Enforcement Family Support Grant: Vermont State Police, Final Report**

**Author(s):                 John Meyer, William Clements**

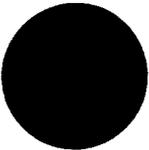
**Document No.:           186278**

**Date Received:         January 22, 2001**

**Award Number:         96-FS-VX-0008**

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**Assessment of the Law Enforcement  
Family Support Grant -  
Vermont State Police**

Final Report

Vermont Center for Justice Research

December 1998

186278

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Ft. Belvoir, CO 80506-6000

# **Assessment of the Law Enforcement Family Support Grant - Vermont State Police**

December 1998

Prepared by:

John Meyer, Ed.D., Principal Investigator  
Research Associate

William Clements, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Prepared for:

Institute for Law and Justice  
1018 Duke Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Vermont Center for Justice Research  
33 College Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

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## EVALUATION OF

### **"Critical Incidents in Vermont Law Enforcement: a Family Response"**

#### *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

The Vermont State Police was awarded a Department of Justice grant for Critical Incident Stress Management and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing training program for troopers, dispatchers and their spouses or significant others. The Vermont Center for Justice Research of Norwich University evaluated the program. The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To evaluate the initial five day intensive On-Site Training Program
- To evaluate the follow-up training components
- To evaluate and assess the training outcomes on peers and families

The evaluation consisted of individual interviews, a review of program documentation, a written survey and personal observation and participation in one monthly training session. The results of the evaluation of the above three components found that:

- The five day intensive program at On-Site Academy was successfully completed
- The monthly follow-up programs for the Peer Support Team, the State Police recruit training program and the cycle training program for all Vermont State Police, to introduce the program, was completed.
- The spousal training and the proposed eight hour training program for all Vermont Law Enforcement agencies was not completed due to lack of time and resources.
- The outcomes on peers and families is not clear at this time due to only three spouses and significant others involved. The training schedule competed with ongoing family scheduling. This part of the program is being redesigned to accommodate family schedules.

## Findings:

- ◆ The On-Site Academy five day training program for CISD and CISM has provided a strong foundation for the Vermont State Police Peer Support Team. Ten troopers, five dispatchers and two spouses and or significant others attended.
- ◆ The spousal support program needs to be completed as outlined in the original grant . Due to the demands on the families of the participants, it was inappropriate for both parents, or for single parents to be away from their families for a five day period. The program is being redesigned to more appropriately fit the schedule of the families. See Table #1.
- ◆ The Vermont State Police Peer Support Program is being gradually accepted by those who have participated in Critical Incident Stress Management pre-incident education and those who have been debriefed by their peers after specific critical incidents. Those who have not been involved in any education and training are less likely to support the effort.
- ◆ Team members want to spend more time at monthly meetings focusing on the infrastructure of the program rather than additional training topics.
- ◆ The eight hour in-service training program on Family Issues in Law Enforcement to Vermont Law Enforcement agencies at the Vermont Police Academy has not been completed due to the State Police work load. All the team members are full time troopers and dispatchers in Vermont.

## Action Items:

- ◆ *Various action items are being addressed either by the team at large or by the individual working committees to ensure the Vermont State Police Peer Support Program becomes a viable self-supporting program.*
  - ◆ Infrastructure development meetings are scheduled during the next monthly training sessions.
  - ◆ The Spousal training programs are being scheduled over a compressed period to accommodate family schedules.
  - ◆ The Peer Support Teams are developing regional teams with mental health professionals.
  - ◆ Supplemental funding is being requested to provide advanced CISM training to the initial team and to continue the monthly training sessions with On-Site Academy.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Vermont State Police was awarded a National Institute of Justice grant in October 1996 to develop a **Peer Support Program and a Vermont State Spouse Peer Support Program.**

The objectives of the grant were to

1. Develop a Vermont State Police Peer Support Team
2. Develop a Vermont State Police Spouse Peer Support Team
3. Train all Vermont State troopers in the basic principles of pre-incident Stress Management.
4. Provide training to applicants and recruits to the VSP
5. Offer in - service training course on Family Issues in Law Enforcement

The Vermont State Police recognize the social and psychological costs of their stressful work on the spouse and family of the officers. Research suggests that "by providing a peer support team, stress levels will be reduced, family problems will become lesser, and morale will increase" (Emergency 90).

Under a separate evaluation grant, the Vermont Center for Justice Research conducted interviews with key participants in the project, reviewed program documentation and conducted a brief survey of the troopers and dispatchers. The Vermont Center for Justice Research was established by executive order in 1987 as the state's criminal justice Statistical Analysis Center (SAC). Through the collection and analysis of criminal justice data, the Center's mission is to develop objective information for criminal justice policy making. The Center promotes communication between agencies and a system-wide approach to criminal justice problems and, is funded jointly by state and federal funds. In addition, the Center offers a variety of consulting services to criminal justice and public safety agencies in the areas of program evaluation, research design, statistical analysis, and data management.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the three major components of the program:

1. *The On-Site Academy five day program:* On - Site Academy is a treatment facility dealing with law enforcement personnel and other crisis workers experiencing stress as a result of critical incidents. The Vermont Peer Support Team participated in the five day Stress Management and Peer Support Development training program in Gardner, Mass.
2. *The follow-up training for Vermont Troopers and recruits :* After the five day program monthly follow-up training programs were to be completed and Vermont State Police Recruits were to be exposed to pre-incident and family issues training by the Peer Support Team ( PST) members.
3. *General Outcome of training program on peers and family:* the third objective was to look at the general outcome of the training program on peers and family. Due to the small number of spouses participating in the program, little information is available at this time. The difficulty recruiting spouses to the program is discussed later in this report. The team is developing creative training modules to accommodate the future scheduling needs of families and spouses.

### ***EVALUATION PROCESS***

*A series of interviews were conducted with the 10 troopers, 5 dispatchers and 2 spouses or significant others who participated in the training.* The focus of this evaluation is process oriented and did not examine the skill retention or information retained, six months after training. Broad satisfaction and utilization rates were collected with a short written questionnaire and through interviews lasting from one to one and a half hours. Most of the interviews took place at the barracks and consisted of a series of open ended questions about their experience with the program. The principle evaluator also participated in the July monthly training session for the Peer Support Team conducted by On - Site Academy.

## **GRANT ORIGIN**

Lt. Craig Iverson and Trooper Mike Sorensen, members of the former Health Unit of the Vermont State Police submitted the original grant to the Department of Justice. The Health Unit consisted of three sworn personnel and two civilian dispatchers. It did not provide fundamental mental health services, nor was there a spouse or peer support component. The program was not visible to the entire organization. "We did not know what we were going to do", reported one member of the unit. "Up until the Vermont State Police Peer Support Program, we had a protocol for major disasters and incidents, but had little insight into the toll and cost of the day to day stressors on the force", was a phrase repeated by several troopers and dispatchers.

Trooper Sorensen wrote the initial grant with input and organizational support from other staff. The On Site Academy, a residential treatment center based on Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, under the directorship of Hayden A. Duggan, Ed.D., Gardner, Mass., became a partner with the State Police on this grant. The staff of the Academy provided emergency consultation, guidance and post - training to peer support members, their spouses and or significant others.

## **RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

In March of 1997, Lt. Cl. John Sinclair sent an e-mail to the Vermont State Police Health Unit announcing the formation of a Peer Support Team and requesting names of volunteers to attend the training program. The criteria used to screen participants included:

1. A good listener and sensitive to the problems and needs of others.
2. At least 24 years of age with two or more years on the job.
3. Had a reputation as a person that others already turn to now informally.
4. Willing to be part of a quality volunteer team.
5. Is interested in the challenge of crisis situations.
6. Is willing to gain knowledge and develop skills through training.

They were advised to contact Lt. Craig Iverson in the Middlebury barracks. Vermont has approximately 300 troopers and 65 dispatchers in twelve barracks. About thirty dispatchers and

troopers responded to this notice. Ten troopers and five dispatchers representing nine of the twelve barracks were interviewed and selected to participate in the program (see appendix A). The initial goal of the proposal was to identify one trooper and his/her spouse from each of the 12 barracks in Vermont. Only two spouses participated. *The participation of spouses and significant others was key to the initial grant.* Reasons given for the lack of participation include:

- ▶ Police traditionally have dealt with police issues outside the family and prefer not to get their families involved in their work, “ People are apprehensive about this program at this time.”
- ▶ The amount of time required for the training program was more than most families can afford to have both spouses away for anything.
- ▶ Not all people are capable to go through such a rigorous training program, “ Not everyone can do this type of work - it depends on the personality of the individual.”
- ▶ There was basic resistance to the program at first by the spouses and some troopers
- ▶ Three of the subjects reported many people saw this program to be a “touchy-feely” program. This perception is gradually changing as more of the troopers are informed of the program either by participating in a debriefing or stress management program. As the peer support program becomes more visible, more troopers, their spouses and families are accepting the program.

## COMPONENTS OF TRAINING GRANT

A. A **five day training program** ( appendix B) conducted at On Site Academy included:

1. Basic Incident Stress Debriefing and Peer Support
2. Traumatic Stress Management
3. Family Issues for Public Safety

B. On Site Academy **monthly training programs** for one year after the training.

C. A two hour course in CISM for Vermont State Police **Cycle Training**.

D. A **one day course for police academy recruits** and their significant others.

E. An **eight hour in-service** offered to all Vermont Law Enforcement Personnel.

**STATUS OVERVIEW OF TRAINING PROGRAM**

<b><u>Training Program</u></b>	<b><u>Status</u></b>	<b><u># of participants</u></b>
Five Day Program	Completed	10 Troopers 5 Dispatchers 2 spouses/significant others
Monthly Training	On going	Same as above
Vermont State Police Cycle Training	Completed	All VSP
Recruit training - actual program was two hours	Completed	4 of 12 recruits
Eight Hour In-service	Not completed	N/A

**FIVE DAY INTENSIVE PROGRAM**

The five day intensive Critical Incident Stress Management program consisted of trainers from On Site Academy, Green Mountain CISM Team, various officers from Boston Police Stress Support Program and the coordinator of the Boston City Police CISD program and the Massachusetts State Police EAP.

Topics covered during the program included: basic knowledge of the biological mechanism of the human stress response, definitions of crisis intervention, critical incident stress management and peer support. Other topics included the Dynamics of Fear and Critical Incidents, Post - Shoot trauma and use of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. The training also included Family Issues and Law Enforcement, the Law Enforcement personality, and spousal peer support. The course focused on actual events, using videos to introduce critical incidents including suicide of an officer, shootings, airplane crashes and natural disasters and accidental deaths. Role plays, team discussions and case studies provided a learning style most valuable to the participants. Most of the team felt the course was "intense, valuable and worthwhile."

Several participants felt the training material may have been too much in a short time frame and they needed to renew key material during the monthly follow-up training. Many felt they will never know how useful the training is until they actually conduct a CISM or CISD program. One member who used the CISD after the training in the first six months identified personal training needs for advanced CISM training. He was confident he would get the additional training in future monthly meetings.

During the five day training program the team developed a policy and procedure paper, Chapter 11, section 5 article 4. It outlines the role and expectations for the peer support program. It was revised March 1998. (Appendix C) and adopted by the Vermont State Police. It outlines basic protocol and general services provided by the Peer Support Team:

- ▶ To provide an initial assessment of the member's needs
- ▶ To provide peer support intervention
- ▶ Critical incident debriefings and defusing
- ▶ Referral to the appropriate resource for service
- ▶ In service training for supervisors to enable them to detect stress in members and inform them of the supervisor's responsibility to both the department and the member.
- ▶ Stress management techniques
- ▶ In service training
- ▶ Recruit training

The policy also outlines the incidents requiring intervention by the Peer Support Team.

Six months after the training program, the participants were asked how satisfied they were with the various training components of the five day intensive training program. This survey was conducted at the July training meeting. Participants were asked five questions on a five point scale, from *very dissatisfied (1)* to *very satisfied (5)*. (See appendix D)

<b>Training Component</b>	<b>Average Satisfaction Score</b>
<b>Overall Program Satisfaction (n=10)</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Introduction to CISM (n=10)</b>	<b>4.8</b>
<b>How to develop a CISM (n=10)</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<b>Family Issues (n=10)</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>Drug and Alcohol Issues (n=10)</b>	<b>4.0</b>

Overall there is high satisfaction with the five day program, while the more specific topics such as family issues and alcohol and drug issues rated lower. This is consistent throughout the interviews when individuals expressed a need for additional training in some of the topic specific areas. *The consistently high satisfaction for the overall program suggests CISM training meets a very real need of the Vermont State Police and their spouses.*

### **MONTHLY TRAINING PROGRAMS**

Upon completion of the five day intensive, the team contracted with On-Site Academy staff to provide additional training in specific topics, information sharing and individual supervision around critical incidents. The team meets on the first Monday of each month at the Naval Reserve in White River Junction. Each month a specific training topic is identified and presented by Dr. Hayden Duggan or an invited guest. Team members conduct a roundtable discussion about peer support activities they may have been involved with since last meeting. This format provides an opportunity to learn from their peers as well as monitor the development of the team. The monthly training sessions are led by Lt. Iverson, with a volunteer note taker. A sample of training topics since January include:

- Committee development and assignments
- Confidentiality
- Disaster Management

- Domestic Violence and interventions
- Mass Casualties
- Skill Training in Peer Support
- Evaluation of Program to date - Where are we going and what do we want to do?

Future topics include the needs of spouses during a critical incident and the past response of the Vermont State Police. In addition, members have requested more time at the monthly meetings to develop the infrastructure of the peer support program.

At the July monthly meeting participants were asked how satisfied they were with the monthly meetings. To date they reported 4.0 on a scale of 5.0 indicating that they were somewhat satisfied with the training. A majority of members requested additional time to develop the infrastructure of the Peer Support Team. Issues raised included how to replace members who have left the team, how the team should function in the future, who makes decisions and how to get more people involved, and how to initiate action to get state funding after the initial grant is terminated. Taking time to deliberately address the infrastructure of the team was echoed by most members and trainer, Dr. Duggan. He referred to another police CISM team "An oversight of one police department peer support program during the first year was to develop a viable infrastructure. Four years later they were continuing to struggle for survival" He felt this was an important issue for this team at this time. Several future monthly training sessions were reserved to deal with this issue in Fall 1998. For additional information concerning the follow-up training programs see Table 1 for a summary.

TABLE ONE

FOLLOW-UP TRAINING PROGRAM STATUS OVERVIEW		
Training Module	Status	Comments
Monthly meetings for a period of one year post initial training.	The PSP team has been meeting monthly since December 1997  Each month has a new training topic	The monthly training meetings are viewed as positive and very helpful. The format is continuing to evolve. The roundtable is valuable, but takes up too much of the time. Members want the meeting to be more structured with an agenda that is followed. Members need time to work on the organizational needs of the PSP as defined through the four assigned committees.
One day course for police academy recruits and significant others	Due to scheduling conflicts only four of the 12 recruits attended any PSP training	The actual time allotted for this effort was two hours. It is not clear why so few of the recruits attended. For those in attendance the feedback was positive.
Cycle training - One day in CISM, traits of emergency service personnel, stress in rural law enforcement and PSTD and CISD procedures.	268VSP received this training	Lt. Iverson and Trooper Sorensen introduced PSP during the Cycle Training for all VSP Troopers. Feedback suggests this was a valuable introduction to the training.

In Service modified 5 day program at the Police Academy for other Law Enforcement Personnel

Not completed

Due to the shortage of manpower and time for development of training materials no modified program has been developed.

**Suggestions to improve the post training programs include:**

- ▶ **Structure the monthly meetings better - keep on an agenda and timeline**
- ▶ **Create a flexible training schedule for the spouses and significant others**
- ▶ **Include the dispatchers in more of the case material in training**
- ▶ **Pay more attention to the organizational needs of the team - we need to focus on how we as a team are going to function. Training is important, but we need to spend time organizing our program. " We work full time on other tasks - we need to take one of our monthly PSP training meetings to do our committee work very soon."**

**Peer and Spousal/ Significant Others Support Program for Recruits**

A one day course, with required attendance by prospective police academy recruits, their spouses and significant others, providing them an overview of the demands and stresses of a law enforcement career was proposed for new recruits. This course was scheduled to fall between the application process and academy attendance allowing individuals to decide if law enforcement is for them and their spouses. *The program was altered to a two hour overview for all recruits, although only four of the twelve attended, due to conflicting schedules. None of the recruits who attended or those who did not attend were interviewed for this study. The program was conducted by one of the trooper's spouses and a trooper. The trainers reported positive and valuable feedback for future recruiting classes. The family issues component will be made a permanent part of the Police Training Academy for State Police. Additional resources are needed to complete the administrative and training development component of the recruit program. It seems again the initial proposal understated the amount of time required to develop and deliver this effort. This theme is repeated throughout this evaluation for most of the follow-up training*

programs. In some cases the time allowed for specific training was vastly underestimated. The Vermont State Police are already understaffed with daily routines and training requirements.

#### CYCLE TRAINING:

A two hour pre-incident course on CISM was successfully conducted as part of the Cycle training for all Vermont State Police, by Lt. Iverson and Trooper Sorensen as outlined in the grant. Each year all Vermont State Police complete a continuing education requirement during their annual cycle training. 268 VSP , members from all ranks, participated in this effort in 1998. The course provided basic knowledge and awareness of the CISM process and it introduced the Peer Support Team. The response was varied from trooper to trooper. The troopers and officers who were either debriefed following a critical incident or were part of a critical stress management activity prior to this training were more supportive of the effort than those who heard about it the first time.

The trainers concluded that experiencing the CISM process was the best way to sell the program to the rank and file. It is also felt that some senior supervisors do not appreciate the potential of the training. In one recent high profile critical incident a senior supervisor did not call on the Peer Support Team. This supervisor had not participated in any previous training. *For each of those who do not see the value of the PSP there are others who are very committed to the program and have mandated their officers to participate in a special introductory effort.* Another senior official was very supportive of the PST. He was personally debriefed by Trooper Sorensen and Lt. Iverson and others, after the Drega incident, where two New Hampshire State Troopers were killed along with two other community members in summer 1997 . Several officers, mandated to participate in this debriefing, reported later they appreciated the information and support. The recurring pattern is that those who participated in a debriefing after an incident are the best advocates and supporters for the CISM/CISD and peer support program.

TABLE TWO

## PEER SUPPORT CONTACTS FOR VERMONT STATE POLICE: January-July 1998

Nature of Contact	Number of Contacts	Comments
Peer Support Contacts (one to one)	Due to confidentiality and informality of the system only estimated numbers are available. On average it is reported 3-4 peer support contacts are made per peer support person monthly.	Team members do not keep specific numbers due to the confidential nature of these contacts. Some reported peers asking for referral information while others spent a few minutes talking with the peer support person (PSP). For many of the PSPs, these contacts were not any different than before the training. The training helped make them be more sensitive to the needs of their peers. CISD IS NOW MANDATORY FOR ALL VERMONT STATE POLICE.
CISD Critical Incident Stress Debriefings	Approximately 10 subjects reported completing a formal CISD.  A critical incident occurred in one of the barracks without conducting a CISD.	The CISD program is still new and unfamiliar to many of the rank and file troopers. Some of the VSP are not convinced of the value of the program. The common belief is it is going to take time for the program to be accepted by all members. This sentiment has been voiced numerous times during the interviews.  In one CISD the response was very positive. Troopers unfamiliar with the program expressed support for the effort after CISD.

Table 2 above outlines the utilization of the various components of the program, including one on one interventions where the peer requests specific information, actual debriefings, pre-incident education efforts for peer and or spouses.

The goal of the program is to make the CISM and CISD part of the Vermont State Police culture and make access to the program a routine activity. It is at this point VSP will know the program is a success. The above numbers cannot be used to determine the success or failure of the program, because there are no baseline expectations. Future program evaluations are expected to show increased numbers due to greater familiarity and exposure of the Peer Support Team.

## PEER SPOUSAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

One of the assumptions of this grant is that a trooper's family is affected as is the public she/he serves, after a trooper experiences a critical incident. By providing assistance of a spousal peer support program stress levels will be reduced, family problems will become lesser, and morale will increase. The spouse peer support team will facilitate open communication between law enforcement and others who can then share their problems and lend assistance when needed. "Both spouses and emergency personnel need improved communication skills to avoid the pitfalls of withdrawal and excessive anxiety"

During the On Site Academy training program *only two spouses or significant others participated* in the program. Although the grant proposed to train one couple from each of the twelve police barracks, only two participated, due to many circumstance beyond the control of the grant and the Vermont Police Peer Support Team. The spouses who participated in the program expressed high satisfaction with the information and training they received from the five day intensive and the monthly meetings. Other Peer Support Team members were very concerned by the lack of spouses and significant others in the program. *When asked how satisfied the team was with the spouses' participation in the program, on a scale of five they scored 2.4 (somewhat dissatisfied). This theme was echoed throughout all the interviews A spousal program needs to be designed that meets the time limitations and needs of the spouses of families. The Peer Support Team in Rutland is reviewing options to conduct a brief and flexible training option for spouses.* The obvious dissatisfaction with the lack of spouses emphasizes the value placed on spousal participation in the Critical Incident Stress Management Program for Vermont State Police, the recruits and their families.

*When asked how satisfied the PST members were with the response of the rank and file toward the Peer Support Program they reported being somewhat dissatisfied (2.5 on a scale of 5.0) It was also reported that only 50 to 60% of the Vermont State Police are familiar with the PSP. Without conducting a specific study of the rank and file it is unclear how well informed members are about PSP or how they heard about it. There is a general belief that as the program matures,*

and as more individual rank and file become exposed to CISM and CISD, either through education or through actual debriefings after critical incidents, the positive response to PSP will increase throughout the Vermont State Police.

*When asked how satisfied the team was with the support they received from their superiors around the PSP the team reported being somewhat satisfied (4.2 out of 5.0). Several members reported their supervisors are not supportive and failed to initiate a debriefing as referred to above. "They are from the old school of policing". Most of the team members interviewed reported their supervisors were becoming increasingly supportive of the program. In one barracks the Captain asked one of the team members to orient all members in three other barracks about CISM and CISD. This particular supervisor mandated all personnel to attend. He reports favourable responses to the training.*

#### **EIGHT HOUR IN-SERVICE TRAINING**

An eight hour in-service training for all Vermont law enforcement personnel was scheduled to be conducted by the Peer Support Team during the first year of the grant following the training. The course is a modified version of the five day intensive training at On-Site Academy focusing on stress, and its impact on law enforcement personnel and their families and how peer support programs function. *To date this training module has not been developed or conducted due to the time constraints on the troopers responsible for this program.* Discussions are underway to identify additional funding to bring in trainers to develop the training curriculum and to conduct the modified training program.

**ADDITIONAL FINDINGS**

During the July monthly meeting the participants were surveyed to track additional information. The following responses were taken from the surveys and will serve as a benchmark for future program evaluation efforts and be fed back to future monthly meetings for discussion about the program protocols.

**1. Should the PSP be administered by a paid individual?**

There was an even split to this question. Approximately 50% thought it should be administered by a paid individual while the other half felt the opposite. As of July 1998, there are no discretionary funds to address this request.

Due to the full-time work schedules of many of the team members and due to the demands to keep the PSP a strategic priority for the Vermont State Police it is recommended that some form of funding or grant money be secured for a part - time administrator that would report to the team. This could be a short term development project. Once the program is established and becomes a part of the VSP culture the position need not be funded. The team is at a critical developmental period during the next year. Already, there have been team members who have left the team due to relocation and or promotion. Unless there is a clear protocol to replace trained members over the next year, the effort could be sidetracked.

**2. What is your number one concern about the program six months from now?**

The following responses were reported as concerns for six months from now.

- ▶ Future funding
- ▶ Team Development and retention of current members
- ▶ Future existence of team as a viable and active team for the force
- ▶ Frustration of team members due to lack of goal achievement
- ▶ Moving ahead developing stronger skills
- ▶ Developing a strong organization for PSP

The team is concerned about its capacity to maintain itself, promote the program and be a valuable service to the law enforcement community. The team members are consistently concerned for the survival of the unit beyond the first year. Throughout this report they are asking for time to address the infrastructure of the effort. They are requesting time to develop the committee assignments eg., develop PSP protocols, identify professional mental health and other resources and complete organizational committee tasks.( See Table 3 below) The team wants time to make PSP part of the Vermont State Police organizational culture and routine. Their goal is to make the PST a viable, visible and valuable resource for all Vermont Law Enforcement members and their families.

TABLE THREE

COMMITTEES TO DEVELOP PEER SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE		
COMMITTEE	TASKS	OUTCOMES
<p><b>TRAINING</b></p> <p>To develop standards and credentials for clinical qualifying process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Write articles</li> <li>■ Conduct information sessions</li> <li>■ Develop brochures</li> </ul>	<p>Trooper magazine article published.</p> <p>All barracks have been informed about program.</p> <p>Brochure developed and mailed to all VSP personnel</p> <p>Magnets are being designed to be handed to all VSP.</p>
<p><b>POLICY</b></p> <p>To produce and draft procedures, policies and protocols for Peer Support Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Write up procedures for VSP CISM program</li> <li>■ Family Involvement</li> <li>■ Replacing team members who leave</li> <li>■ Introducing new team members</li> <li>■ New training programs in future</li> <li>■ How to prevent burnout of current team members.</li> <li>■ Develop procedures for families during funeral</li> </ul>	<p>Many of the tasks for this committee are at the discussion stage only due to the lack of time away from training and front line shift work.</p>

<p><b>RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>To interface with other community agencies doing debriefings and or stress related work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify quality referral sources for future requests</li> <li>■ Collaborate with referral sources</li> <li>■ Develop protocol for using resources</li> <li>■ Ensure state wide resource representation</li> </ul>	<p>Due to time constraints again little has been completed for this committee.</p>
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### 3. What specific training needs do people need to meet the overall goals of the Peer Support Team?

Generally, the team sees a need to develop advanced Critical Incident Stress Management Skills with emphasis on learning more about specific topics such as drug and alcohol, group dynamics and interviewing skills. Specific reponses include:

- ▶ Everything
- ▶ Doing one on ones
- ▶ CISD skills
- ▶ Public Relations - How to sell the concept?
- ▶ Spousal training
- ▶ Communication skills within the department
- ▶ Drug and Alcohol
- ▶ Empathy and listening

Again, there are two categories of skills requested: *organizational skills* to develop and sell the Peer Support Program to the rank and file and *individual training skills*. Individual skills have been introduced during the five day program and during some of the monthly training programs. At this time the organizational skills are needed to ensure the existence of the program five years from now. The individual skills can be addressed in an advanced training program.

There is some urgency to their concerns about the future of PSP. Based on formal organizational research, new programs such as the PSP experience critical growth periods. Many new efforts

fail, for various structural or process reasons, after 18 to 24 months from the beginning of the program. The PSP is moving into this critical phase during the latter part of 1998. The Peer Support team is at a critical developmental stage.

#### **4. Additional comments:**

Respondents to this questionnaire were asked if they had additional concerns about the program . Specific issues were raised.

- ▶ Is the PST providing respectful quality service to its target audience? Does Law Enforcement understand what we are about?
- ▶ How is the program seen by VSP/Spouses/ Dispatchers etc.?
- ▶ What are the goals and plans to deliver the program in the future?
- ▶ Are we meeting our goals - has the team progressed? Is the PST working?

The PST, after six months of intensive training and participation is seeking feedback. Is the program doing what it intended to do? Members have become so entrenched with some aspects of the program it is important to ask their constituents how they see the program. It appears the team needs to reframe its objectives and goals for its second year of operation. The strategic mission is clear, to provide CISM and CISD services to all Vermont Law Enforcement. Is the team reaching its goals? This is where this study ends and a new one needs to begin within the next year to ensure the team's future.

**Recommendations****1. Develop infrastructure of the current program to ensure continuity of the PSP.**

One common theme woven throughout this evaluation is the concern that the initial Peer Support Team is going through organizational development changes that require deliberate and focussed attention to its' future evolution within the larger 'Vermont State Police organization.

It is not enough to have specific individual skills. The team needs to become integrated into the VSP culture. To do this requires attention to the structure, the protocol and clear understanding of the mission of the team. What is it all about and how will it achieve its mission?

**2. Submit a grant for additional funds to train a second peer support team.**

As the team moves into the second cycle, several members of the first team have been promoted within the department or have transferred to another part of the state. The team needs to develop a protocol to train new replacements and increase the number of trained spousal peers as proposed in the initial grant. The initial team has learned some important lessons to make the family issues and spousal training a reality. There are several creative responses being proposed to address this concern. Additional funds are needed to provide the above training and to begin advanced training for the first team.

**3. Complete one training program for all VSP emergency people within the next twelve months.**

The initial grant proposed to develop a modified CISM/CISD and peer support training program for all Vermont Law Enforcement personnel passing through the Police Training Academy and those in the field today. Due to the limited resources and full time positions of all team members this project needs additional time and resources to develop this program. In addition, the team does not have specific skills in developing training curriculum. It is important to hire someone with skills and expertise in training development.

**4. Fund and conduct an evaluation program to determine how well the program is understood by the rank and file of the police organization. How satisfied are the customers to the CISM program?**

With this evaluation, some program benchmarks have been developed. It is now known the spousal training program is a valued part of the initial grant. The strong concern of the team around the low spousal participation suggests members value this component of the grant. What is not known through this evaluation effort is how this program is perceived by the non-team members. The views, suggestions and other reactions to the PSP would be valuable input to the program prior to submitting another training grant.

**5. Develop an Intern program with a local university to support the PSP for all emergency people in Vermont.**

Critical incidents do not occur in a vacuum. It happens within a family, community or regional area. The recent natural disasters in Vermont is an example of opportunities to involve all state emergency personell in the Critical Incident Stress Management and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing for the larger Vermont community. Under the supervision of a university academic program, an intern could be assigned to collaborate with the Vermont State Police, local emergency teams, community mental health crisis teams and schools etc. There are many intern programs that would support this effort.

**6. Introduce mental health crisis teams to State Police PSP teams across the state.**

The Vermont State Police Peer Support Program is statewide and is consistently interacting with the community mental health agencies, especially the local crisis teams. During local suicides, critical incidents, bombings and other critical incidents the two professional groups interact. The recommendation to invite the mental health community on a limited basis to train with the State Police Peer Support Team would be an asset for any community. An introductory pilot program could serve as the foundation for future programs.

**SUMMARY**

The Department of Justice grant for *Critical Incidents in Vermont Law Enforcement: A Family Response* has impacted the Vermont State Police and their families. It has made members of the force more sensitive to the day to day stress on the physical and psychological behavior of the membership. A core team of 10 state troopers, 5 dispatchers, and 2 spouses or significant others participated in a five day intensive training program and continue to meet monthly for additional CISD and CISM skills development. In addition, the force has informed all Vermont State Police of the effort. Four working committees are addressing additional training for the core team, future recruits, their spouses and significant others. The program initiated a debriefing policy and protocol to future critical incidents that may occur to the State Police.

Discussions are under way to ensure the future of the program. Second year resources are being sought to familiarize all Vermont Law Enforcement officials about CISD and CISM in a modified one day training program. Peer Support Team committees are addressing the infrastructure of the team.

The broader organizational culture of the Vermont State Police is being influenced, although the strength of that influence remains modest as illustrated by the findings presented above. The "supportive environment" of the Peer Support Program seems antithetical to the traditional "para-military" attitude within the force during a time of critical incidents or crisis. Some members recognize that this cultural shift is in conflict with the traditional law enforcement orientation. Officers not familiar with this supportive style appear threatened by this new philosophy. The program is also encouraging more communication between barracks, something several members feel is needed for reasons beyond the peer support program. This program is acting as a catalyst for increased inter-barracks communication but has yet to develop in the manner envisioned by team members.

# **Appendix A**

## **Five Day Training Program**

# On-Site Academy

"Serving Those Who Serve"

Gardner Group, Inc.  
PO Box 1031  
Gardner, MA 01440-6031

Telephone 508-632-3518  
Fax 508-630-3987

## ON-SITE ACADEMY/VERMONT STATE POLICE:

### INTENSIVE FIVE DAY TRAINING IN CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT AND CRISIS INTERVENTION/PEER SUPPORT STRATEGIES

---

Nov. 3-7, 1997 at the Colonial Inn, Gardner

#### MONDAY

- 08:30: Registration, coffee, doughnuts
- 09:00 Welcome, Introductions, and Course Overview:  
Vermont State Police and On-Site Academy Staff
- 09:45: Det. Richard Atwood, Director, Boston Police  
Stress Support Program
- 10:30: Break
- 10:45: Det. Edward Lee, Director, Mass. State Police  
Stress Unit
- 11:30: Hayden Duggan: Overview of Trauma and Recovery:  
Defining Crisis Intervention, Critical Incident  
Stress Management, and Peer Support
- 12:30: Lunch Break
- 13:30: Roger Solomon: Introduction to the Dynamic of Fear  
and Critical Incident Trauma
- 15:00: Break
- 15:30: Post-Shoot Trauma, Recovery, and the Use of Eye  
Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- 17:00: End for day

## ON-SITE ACADEMY/VERMONT STATE POLICE INTENSIVE TRAINING

TUESDAY

- 08:30: Introduction: Basic Critical Incident Stress Management Course - Overview
- 09:00: The Psychophysiological Response to Stress: "Fight or Flight" and the body's adaptation to adrenalin
- 10:30: Break
- 10:45: The Emergency Services Personality and Stress
- 12:00: Lunch
- 13:00: Critical Incidents: Definition, Types, Features
- 15:00: Break
- 15:30: Normal reactions of normal officers to Critical Incidents: signs and symptoms.
- 17:00: End for day

## WEDNESDAY

- 09:00: Patrolman Mike O'Sullivan, Boston Police Stress Support Program, Co-Ordinator, CISD Team: Team organization, recruitment, selection, and deployment
- 09:45: Introduction to Defusings, Debriefings, and Demobilizations
- 10:30: Break
- 10:45: Stages of a Debriefing
- 12:30: Lunch
- 13:30: Afternoon Session: Practicum
- 15:15: Break
- 15:30: Overview: Disaster Psychology and Grief Reactions
- 17:00: End for day

## ON-SITE ACADEMY/VERMONT STATE POLICE INTENSIVE TRAINING

## THURSDAY

- 09:00: Frank Silfies, Director, Green Mountain CISM Team:  
Introduction: The Family Factor
- 10:30: Break
- 10:45: The Family Factor cont.
- 12:30: Lunch Break
- 13:30: Sgt. Tom Fleming, Lowell, Mass. Police Department;  
Director, Lowell P.D. Employee Assistance Program;  
Director, CISM Team: Managing multiple officer  
deaths (accidental)
- 15:00: Break
- 15:30: Frank Silfies: Family Factor continued
- 16:30: End for Day

## FRIDAY

- 08:30: Introduction: Peer Support, Peer Counseling, and  
Crisis Intervention Strategies in Law Enforcement
- 09:00: Richard Milan (ret.) Boston Police Stress Support  
Unit, and Valerie Duggan, On-Site Academy:  
Assessment and Management of Alcohol and Drug  
Issues in Law Enforcement Officers
- 10:15: Break
- 10:30: Valerie Duggan: Assessment and Management of  
Domestic Violence issues among Law Enforcement  
Officers, and Spousal Support issues
- 11:30: Hayden Duggan: Assessment and Management of  
Suicidality in Law Enforcement
- 12:30: Lunch Break
- 13:30: Trooper Gil Bernard, Employee Assistance Social  
Worker, Mass. State Police Stress Unit:  
Confidentiality and Privilege in Peer Support  
Work
- 14:15: Practicum

**ON-SITE ACADEMY/VERMONT STATE POLICE INTENSIVE TRAINING**

15:00: Break

15:15: Question & Answer, Discussion

16:00: Presentation of Diplomas and Concluding remarks

16:30: Conference ends

---

## **Appendix B**

### **List of Participants**

**PEER SUPPORT TEAM  
PAGER NUMBERS  
TROOPERS**

Lt. Craig Iverson .....283-5901  
Tpr. Mike Sorensen.....741-2773  
Tpr. Karen Brown.....741-5801  
Tpr. Mark Galle.....283-5902  
Tpr. Sonny Provetto....283-5904  
Tpr. Helaine Gaiotti.....283-5905  
Tpr. Gary Shuhart.....283-5906  
Tpr. John Hagen.....283-5907  
Tpr. Ruth Whitney.....283-5909  
Sgt. Mike Roj.....283-5910

**DISPATCHERS**

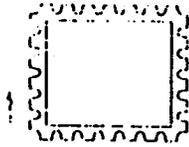
Dick Lacallade.....283-5911  
Betty Tabor.....283-5912  
Laura Moulton.....283-5913  
Carole Taylor.....283-5914  
John Scott.....283-5915

**SIGNIFICANT OTHERS**

Julia Bowen.....283-5908  
Paula Galle.....283-5903



Vermont State Police Peer Support Team  
P.O. Box 459  
East Middlebury, VT 05740



**Vermont State Police  
Peer Support Team**



Peer Support  
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing  
Defusings  
Education  
Demobilizations

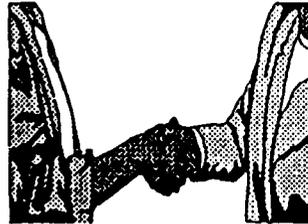


# PEER SUPPORT TEAM

## INTRODUCTION

It's unfortunate, but true, that the stressors law enforcement professionals are exposed to are increasing. It's also true that law enforcement professionals do not tend to discuss their work with outsiders, and often do not discuss incidents with co-workers or even family members. **THE VERMONT STATE POLICE PEER SUPPORT TEAM** has been formed to provide various methods of assistance to law enforcement employees, and their families; in an effort to help them cope with the stress of the job. The team is comprised of a group of troopers, dispatchers, and significant others who have been trained in peer support, critical incident stress management, and crisis intervention strategies. The types of services provided are outlined at the right. All interactions are held in confidence.

## PEER SUPPORT



Peer Support is an on-going mechanism within an organization to provide confidential free help to fellow workers and their families, who may be experiencing job-related and/or personal distress.

## EDUCATION

Members of the peer support team will be available to provide training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress in oneself and in others. Further training is available in how to manage that stress, and how to minimize the effects of stress.

## CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING



A debriefing is a discussion about a critical incident, not a critique. Its purpose is to lessen the impact of the event and speed recovery. Debriefings usually take 2-3 hours.

## DEMOBILIZATIONS

Are very brief informational meetings conducted immediately following a critical incident, usually a mass casualty. They generally last no longer than 10 minutes. Their purpose is to assess the well being of police and/or emergency workers, inform them of pertinent issues and to assess the need for a debriefing.

## DEFUSINGS



Are shortened versions of debriefings. They usually take 20-45 minutes. Their purpose is also to reduce the impact of a critical event and accelerate the recovery process. The need for a debriefing may be determined through a defusing.

## OTHER

All team members are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can be reached by pager, e-mail, direct contact or by contacting Lieutenant Iverson at the Middlebury office of the State Police. A list of the team members and their pager numbers is provided on the back of this pamphlet or in CAD.

# **Appendix C**

## **Policy Statement**

SECTION V

CHAPTER 11 Physical Fitness  
ARTICLE IV Peer Support Team

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide assistance to members and Department of Public Safety personnel who have personal or health problems which adversely affect their lives, their families or their job performance.

1.2 The Peer Support Team will provide members and Department of Public Safety personnel with a program that will offer:

(A) Training/Education

(1) To include areas in stress management presented at both the recruit and in-service levels; and

(2) training to all commissioned and non-commissioned supervisors that includes personal stress awareness, detection of stress and the supervisor's responsibility to the Department and the member.

(3) To provide pre-incident education and stress inoculation.

(4) Information on community resources dealing with other health related issues will be provided upon request.

(B) Referral Information

(1) To provide assistance through crisis intervention, peer support, psychological services and other referral services.

2.0 POLICY

2.1 The Vermont State Police recognizes the numerous pressures of the law enforcement profession on its personnel. The Department will endeavor to assist by providing a Peer Support Team. The Department will encourage referrals to the team for support and assistance.

2.2 In addition to the provisions of Section IV, Chapter 1, Article II, members of the Vermont State Police and their supervisors shall contact the Peer Support Team for assistance in dealing with traumatic stress.

Effective March 1, 1987

Revised March 1, 1994

Revised March 15, 1998

Revised July 1, 1990

Revised December 1, 1997

CHAPTER II Physical Fitness  
 ARTICLE IV Peer Support Team

2.3 Members may be referred to the Peer Support Team or professional counselors as determined by the Director.

2.4 It is the policy of the Peer Support Team to maintain confidentiality and therefore, except as provided below, communications made to a member of the Peer Support Team are considered confidential. A communication made to a member of the Peer Support Team shall not be confidential when mandated by law or when the person is a threat to the safety of themselves or to others.

### 3.0 PROCEDURES

3.1 The Peer Support Team shall consist of at least ten (10) sworn members and five (5) civilian personnel. One member shall be designated by the Director as the Team Leader and shall be accountable to the Director for the operation of the Peer Support Team..

3.2 Other members shall be assigned to the Peer Support Team by the Director with the advice of the Unit Supervisor.

3.3 Any assignment to the Peer Support Team shall be voluntary and will be in addition to a member's regularly assigned duties.

3.4 The Peer Support Team Supervisor shall identify appropriate training for members of the Peer Support Team.

3.5 Services of the Peer Support Team will include but not limited to:

- (A) an initial assessment of the member's needs;
- (B) peer support intervention;
- (C) critical incident debriefings and defusing;
- (D) referral to the appropriate resource for service,
- (E) in-service training for supervisors to enable them to detect stress in members and inform them of the supervisor's responsibility to both the Department and the member.
- (F) stress management techniques
- (G) in-service training
- (H) recruit training

3.6 There is no cost associated with any informational or referral service which is provided by the Peer Support Team. Prior to being referred to counseling provided by a source outside of the Department, the member will be in-

~~Effective March 1, 1987~~

~~Revised March 1, 1994~~

~~Revised March 15, 1998~~

Revised July 1, 1990

Revised December 1, 1997

SECTION V

CHAPTER 11 Physical Fitness  
ARTICLE IV Peer Support Team

formed whether these services are free, are covered by insurance, or require a fee.

3.7 Referrals for Voluntary Assistance

- (A) Requests for assistance may be made at any time by contacting a member of the Peer Support Team.
- (B) Referrals may be made by a supervisor at any level of command.
- (C) Supervisors are not precluded from making referrals to appropriate resources outside the Department.
- (D) If a member seeks voluntary assistance from the Peer Support Team, the Department may not require any disclosure of information from the Team member.

3.8 Mandatory Referrals for Assistance

- (A) Referrals can only be made by the Director after receiving all pertinent information from the member's supervisors.
  - (1) The referral must be based on significant job performance difficulty and/or shall include those situations where assistance is provided in connection with disciplinary action.
  - (2) Members involved in a high trauma incident (i.e., shootings, serious assaults, situations resulting in great personal injury to the member, or any incident that a supervisor determines has had greater than usual impact on the member) shall automatically be considered Department referrals, and shall be directed to the Peer Support Team.
  - (3) These referrals shall be coordinated through a Peer Support Team member.
- (B) This does not prevent a supervisor from relieving a member from duty as described in Section III, Article IV, (1.4) of the Rules and Regulations. In this event the Commissioner must be notified immediately.
- (C) In the event of a mandatory referral, only the Commissioner may authorize administrative leave.

~~Effective March 1, 1987~~

~~Revised March 1, 1994~~

~~Revised March 15, 1998~~

~~Revised July 1, 1990~~

~~Revised December 1, 1997~~

SECTION V

CHAPTER 11 Physical Fitness  
ARTICLE IV Peer Support Team

- (D) If a mandatory referral is made, the Department has the right to receive a fitness for duty report from the provider before the member returns to duty.
- (E) The Department retains the right to choose the appropriate professional for the member to see.
- (F) Expenses for these referrals will be borne by the Department.

3.9 Notification of the Peer Support Team leader or designee shall be made as soon as possible following these types of events:

- (A) Line of duty death
- (B) Serious line of duty injury
- (C) Member in service suicide
- (D) Disaster or incidents which have mass casualties
- (E) Unusually tragic deaths to children
- (F) Significant events where the victims are relatives or friends of members.
- (G) Events that attract excessive media attention.
- (H) Events that seriously threaten the lives of members.
- (I) Any event that has significant emotional power to overwhelm the member.

3.10 The following incidents will result in a mandatory debriefing with mandatory attendance by all members involved in the incidents:

- (A) Line of duty death.
- (B) Serious line of duty injury.
- (C) Death of a civilian due to Department operations.
- (D) Suicide of a co-worker.
- (E) Incidents with intense media coverage.
- (F) Mass casualty incident.
- (G) Death of a victim after prolonged rescue.
- (H) Serious injury or death of a child.
- (I) Any high risk event where life/lives of members was threatened.
- (J) Any other incident which provokes significant stress response in the members involved.

Effective March 1, 1987

Revised March 1, 1994

Revised March 15, 1998

Revised July 1, 1990

Revised December 1, 1997

# **Appendix D**

## **Questionnaire**

## VERMONT STATE POLICE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Vermont Center For Justice Research is conducting an evaluation of the Vermont State Police Peer Support training program. Many of you have met with one of the evaluators. This brief questionnaire will provide additional baseline data concerning the program. Please take a few minutes to complete and return directly to the evaluator. Please do not put your name on this questionnaire. Please use the other side of this paper to respond to the questions, if needed. Thanks.

1. Using the following satisfaction scale, complete each of the specific CISM training components. How satisfied are you with:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied

- \_\_\_ Introductions to Critical Incident Training?
- \_\_\_ How to Develop a CISD program?
- \_\_\_ Family Issues?
- \_\_\_ Drug and Alcohol Issues?
- \_\_\_ Overall Program?

2. Using the same scales, how satisfied are you with:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied

- \_\_\_ Monthly PSP training programs?
- \_\_\_ Support for PSP from Headquarters?
- \_\_\_ The response toward PSP from your peers?
- \_\_\_ The spousal participation rate for PSP?
- \_\_\_ Feedback from your peers on the team?
- \_\_\_ Team development of the PSP to date?

3. What per-cent age of the VSP force is familiar with the Peer Support Program and CISM?

A. \_\_\_ More than 75%    B. \_\_\_ About 50%    C. \_\_\_ Less than 25%

4. How many debriefings have you conducted or supported since Jan. 1998? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many one to one peer contacts have you had since Jan. 1998? \_\_\_\_\_ (approx)  
How many spousal contacts for support have you had around the Peer Support Program? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Should the VSP Peer Support Program be administered with a paid individual?  
\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No

6. What is your number one concern about the program six months from now?  
What is your number one concern about the program one year from now?

7. What is one Peer Support Program skill do you want more training in?

8. What one question do you think is important to do an objective evaluation of this program?

9. Any other comments will be appreciated ---

Thank you for your responses. If you have any suggestions or questions about this evaluation please call Dr. John Meyer at 802-985-8202 or e-mail [jmeyer@juno.com](mailto:jmeyer@juno.com)

July 6, 1998  
police.2

# **Appendix E**

## **Miscellaneous Information and Articles**

# THE VERMONT TROOPER

OFFICIAL  
PUBLICATION  
OF THE VERMONT  
STATE POLICE UNION

SPRING  
1998

VOL. XI, NO. 1



**Vermont Troopers Receive New Hampshire Medals of Merit**

viewed. It was learned that the husband was inside their Shaftsbury residence, with access to several firearms. We also learned that there had been a fairly violent domestic dispute approximately three weeks prior, in which a firearm had been used. Det. Sgt. Barci attempted to make phone contact with the subject several times, but did not get anywhere. It was determined that we would arrest the subject on the domestic violence charge, but not before some on scene intel was gathered. Enter Ross and S/T Mike Sorensen. We decided that it would be best to determine the subject's physical condition and demeanor prior to even considering a physical arrest at that point. Ross and I geared up in subdued clothing and equipped with some night vision equipment and binoculars, we made way to the subject's residence. We were able to see the subject moving around in the residence. We crept closer, to one of the doors where we could look directly into the residence. The subject's dogs kept coming to the door, as if they wanted to be let out. The next thing we saw was the subject loading up a 30-30 rifle. We retreated to the tree line, just in time to hear a shot ring out. Within seconds, we saw the subject moving about in the residence with a rifle. We made it back to the barracks, where we briefed the others. We were certainly glad that we didn't make a direct approach to make an arrest.

It was then decided that two Troopers would maintain surveillance on the residence and wait until the subject emerged. At about 1030 the next morning, the subject did emerge from his residence. He got into his truck and headed toward Bennington. Cpl. Laumann followed the truck while waiting for back up. The subject suddenly turned around, ran over a stop sign, and nearly took Ken head on. A pursuit ensued. In the process, the subject forced S/T Kalinowski off the road, as well as several other vehicles. The pursuit ended when the subject lost control of his truck in Shaftsbury. The subject was taken into custody, without incident, and was transported to the barracks. There it was determined that

he had taken a large quantity of animal medication. He was rushed to the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center for treatment. There it was learned that the subject had some fairly serious medical conditions which required a three day stay in ICU. The subject stayed in ICU for three days, under 24 hour guard of the VSP. Troopers from Rutland and Rockingham assisted by sending personnel. In the end, the subject was charged with Domestic Assault and Kidnapping. As of this writing, he is being held without bail. Another good example of the teamwork concept in Shaftsbury, everyone worked well together to bring this case to a close.

S/T Mike Sorensen has been busy with casework at the barracks, but even more so, administering to a grant from the National Institute of Justice which has enabled the VSP to develop and train a peer support team to serve Troopers, dispatchers, and their families. During the month of September about thirty interested personnel were interviewed for positions on the peer support team. Decisions were very difficult, as all of the personnel who applied, both dispatchers and Troopers, were very high quality. We selected ten Troopers and five dispatchers to attend a five day peer support training in Gardner, MA during early November. The training went well, and the team returned to Vermont ready to provide any necessary peer support. They got the call in mid-December when an incident of justifiable homicide occurred in Waterbury. Several team members provided a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) to those involved. The team received positive comments about the debriefing, a good sign! We look forward to assisting personnel in the future, by providing quality services. It should be noted that most peer support teams operate with about three days of training, whereas our initial training was five days with internationally recognized instructors. The team is not done with training however, as monthly training will occur during 1998. The Vermont State Police will have one of the most highly trained peer support teams in the country by the time we are done here!

On to BCI, or the Bureau of Constant Inactivity, as one of its members refers to it. During September '97 Sgt. Bob Vargo and the nightshift were alerted to a possible plane crash in the remote regions of the Green Mountain National Forest. It was determined, early the next morning that a plane had gone down. Det. Sgt. Paul Barci was activated for the death investigation, as there were likely no survivors. With the assistance of the New York State Police, and one of their choppers, Sgt. Skip Fagerholm was able to locate the crash site from the air. A short time later, ground personnel arrived at the site. As expected, neither of the plane's two occupants had survived. The Shaftsbury team received assistance from the Bennington Rescue Squad, Civil Air Patrol, FAA, NTSB, and many others to bring the case to a close. It was learned that the victims were Canadian citizens, who were not "instrument" qualified. They encountered a freak ice storm, which caused the plane to crash in the mountainous town of Glastenbury. Paul was also called to work on the, as yet unsolved, homicide of a tattoo parlor owner in East Wallingford. Keep up the good work Paul!

Last year, S/T Mike Marvin got assigned to the Bennington County State's Attorney's Office as an investigator. Mike reports that the past year has been a great learning experience, as he has been teamed with a staff of qualified, veteran prosecutors who aggressively prosecute all cases brought before them. Bennington County S/A William Wright has held that office since 1985, and his aggressive leadership has brought that office one of the state's highest conviction rates. Mike also works with D S/A John Lavoie, a career prosecutor who has put bad guys behind bars for the AG's office, the Drug Task Force, and now Bennington County. D S/A Lavoie specializes in bringing problem cases to trial, and his closing arguments are usually "works of art." D S/A David Fenster could be classified as law enforcement's best friend as he spends an enormous amount of time helping the county's law enforcement officers fine tune their



# PEER SUPPORT TEAM



## Contact Form

### Member

- Telephone
- One on One
- Written

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

### Family Member

- Telephone
- One on One
- Written

Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

### Type of Assistance Requested

- Alcohol
  - Drugs
  - ALC/Drugs
  - Emotional
  - Marital
  - Family Related
  - Job Related
  - Psych
  - Leg-GEN
  - Leg-TUD
  - Medical
  - General Int
- Crisis Intervention     CISD Debriefing: How Many? \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Did You Make a Referral (s)? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If YES, Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Did Member / Family Member Accept Referral (s)? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

Was Anyone Admitted For Inpatient Alcohol / Drug Related, Or Mental Health Problem?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If So, Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Did That Person Complete His / Her Program? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

Was The Member / Family Member Satisfied With Referral (s)? \_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F**

### **Program Development Concerns**

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS

The statements are direct quotes taken from interview notes during this evaluation. They reflect the complexity of needs the PST requires. It also reflects the impact the PST has on the VSP organization.

1. We need more support from senior command staff for the program.
2. We need to have a better communications link between barracks about the program. We can learn from each other. (It could just be typed e-mail messages about other teams and events in other barracks PSP) It would be nice to know what other teams are doing in other barracks. This is not just for the PSP.
3. We need to take time from training to do our committee work and develop the infrastructure of the PSP. Unless we do this PSP could fall apart.
4. The monthly meetings need to be structured with an agenda.
5. We need to replace team members who leave.
6. We need to be more of a team and not differentiate between troopers and dispatchers - the brochure reinforces the differences. The PSP does not need to be broken down by functions and positions.
7. We need to develop the spouse program quickly.
8. Supervisors need to be trained in CISM and the PSP purpose and procedures
9. We are spread too thin already - this program may suffer due to lack of time to maintain the Peer Support Team.
10. We need to support each other on the Peer Support Team - How is this done?
11. We are full time officers. We are busy all month long.
12. Training meetings need a facilitator and gatekeeper
13. Training is needed beyond first year but we do not know what it is
14. How do we make supervisors aware of the need for this program?
15. We need specific debriefing places throughout the state.
16. Who can we call for mental health when the psychologist is not available or not in the area.
17. How can we connect with local mental health providers and community resources?
18. We need to practice what we are preaching, esp. Our team needs to be concerned about stress management for our own team. There is a lot of work to do to make the PSP viable. It is taking its toll on some of our members.
19. We need to celebrate our anniversary and our victories with PSP.
20. We need to look ahead as a team and recognize our developmental strategy down the road.
21. We need to develop a check list to help supervisors determine if an incident is appropriate for CISD.