7818 E. Parham Road
Henrico, Virginia 23294

Administrative and Operational Policy

I. Mission

The Peer Support Team of the Old Dominion EMS Alliance (ODEMSA), Inc., functions to promote mental health awareness and education among public safety personnel, and to provide confidential peer support services to members of the ODEMSA region who experience potentially traumatic events.

The ODEMSA Peer Support Team encourages cooperation and coordination among the out-of-hospital and in-hospital resources, which serve the 9,000 square mile region that, encompasses planning districts 13, 14, 15, and 19 as defined by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Team will provide services at no cost to agencies when requested.

II. Team Administration

ODEMSA's Peer Support Team will report to the Health and Wellness Committee upon establishment of the committee. ODEMSA staff Administrative Team Coordinator will oversee the team, as well as the Health and Wellness Committee. The ODEMSA Administrative Team Coordinator will be responsible for reporting to the Executive Director of ODEMSA and the ODEMSA Board of Directors. The Team will operate under ODEMSA's fiscal year.

A. Team Structure:

1. ODEMSA Administrative Team Coordinator- an ODEMSA staff member, trained in peer support, who acts as the liaison between the team members, the ODEMSA Executive Director and the ODEMSA Board. The ODEMSA Administrative Team Coordinator will be the point of contact (POC) for the Peer Support Team on regional and state levels, dispatching team members in response to a request for service, facilitate activations and projects of the Team as needed, maintain records, and periodically update membership rosters. They will file the required quarterly reports with the Office of EMS after review by the Executive Director. This person shall also serve as a member of the team.

2. ODEMSA Administrative Team Assistant Coordinator- an ODEMSA staff member, trained in peer support, who acts as the liaison between the team members, the ODEMSA Executive Director and the ODEMSA Board. The ODEMSA Administrative Assistant Coordinator will be the point of contact (POC) for the Peer Support Team on regional and state levels, dispatching team members in response to a request for service, facilitate activations and projects of the Team

as needed. They will maintain records, periodically update membership rosters, and file the required quarterly reports with the Office of EMS after review by the Executive Director if the Administrative Team Coordinator is unavailable or unable to perform their duties, Examples; (Personal time, illness, death, or termination as an employee of ODEMSA).

3. Team Leader- Elected by the Team membership to serve a term of one year, with a maximum of two years, or until a successor is selected. This person will chair the Peer Support Team's quarterly meetings and report up to the ODEMSA Administrative Team Coordinator.

4. Assistant Team Leader- Elected by the Team membership to serve a term of one year, with a maximum of two years, or until a successor is selected. This person will fill in when the Team Leader is not available.

5. Lead Clinician- A mental health clinician, as defined in Section 3.AI, whose primary responsibility is the clinical competence and safe practice of the Team. The Lead Clinician assures that team interventions are conducted within the scope of sound mental health standards. The Lead Clinician evaluates the credentials of prospective and current team members to determine if applicants or members are suitable to act as clinicians or peers.

B. **Meetings** - ODEMSA's Peer Support Team will meet a minimum of quarterly or as necessary. The Team will set its meeting schedule at least one year in advance to facilitate the attendance of all members. Each meeting will have a proposed agenda prepared in advance by the ODEMSA Administrative Team Coordinator and Team Leader.

C. **Quorum** – 51% of the members shall constitute a quorum at any regular or impromptu called meeting. Only active members as described under "Team Membership" may be counted toward quorum. Only active members may vote.

D. **Amendment of Administrative and Operational Guidelines** - The modifications of these peer support guidelines will require a three-fourths majority vote of the Team members. The proposed changes must be published and distributed to the membership at least 30 days in advance of the regular or impromptu Peer Support Team meeting.

All guidelines, policies, and procedures of ODEMSA's Peer Support Team are subject to the charter and by-laws of ODEMSA and their interpretation by the Executive Director and Board of Directors.

III. Team Membership

A. Team Composition - The Old Dominion EMS Alliance, Inc., will not discriminate against any employee, or other person, on account of race, color, gender, religious creed, ancestry, age, or national origin.

ODEMSA's Peer Support Team is composed of two categories of members: Clinicians and Peers.

1. **Clinicians**- Clinicians have advanced training to the assessment and management of mental health concerns. They are practiced in the recognition of significant or dangerous mental disturbances and can address those disturbances when detected. Clinicians provide clinical expertise and safety for the Peer Support activities.

   Minimum qualifications for clinicians include Licensed Clinical Social Worker with at least one year of applicable expertise or Licensed Professional Counselor with at least one year of applicable experience. The team's Lead Clinician may accept alternative training and experience that is consistent with good clinical practice and the Peer Support Team's mission.

2. **Peer Support Team Member** - Peer Support Team Member, probationary and full time, shall strive to reflect the interests of the following disciplines: EMS, fire, law enforcement, chaplains, nursing, and emergency communications. Through their personal training and experience, members provide to the Team an understanding of the emergency worker that is unique to their specific field.

   Prerequisites include a minimum of three active years, in good standing with their department/facility, emotional maturity, and reputation of trust within their own peer group.

B. Membership Application Process - Persons interested in joining the ODEMSA Peer Support Team must complete an ODEMSA Peer Support Team application.

Applicants must provide copies of appropriate state certifications or licenses. Clinician applicants who are not licensed by the state will provide copies of all undergraduate and post graduate degrees. The clinician applicant must submit references from each of the following: a coworker, a family member, and a reference that is not family or work related**.**

Peer applicants will need a reference letter and approval from their department's Chief, supervisor, and/or head of the agency of affiliation, or equivalent reference. The peer applicant must submit references from each of the following: a coworker, a family reference and one additional reference that is not family or work related.

No team member may be convicted of a felony or barrier crime. If a member is charged of a felony or barrier crime, he/she must inform the Team Leader and Administrative Team Coordinator within 24 hours. If not reported in the time frame, it will result in immediate expulsion from the Team. Due to the delicate nature of peer support, the member will be placed on administrative suspension pending the outcome of the charges.

C. Membership Task Force - This task force will have three to five members comprised of peer support team members, may include a peer support team member from one of our partnering councils, and/or include a member of the Board of Directors. The Administrative Team Coordinator will act to determine the accuracy of the information provided from the application. If there are unacceptable findings from the reference check and/or application review process, then the application will not be considered. The names and comments of all persons contacted will be maintained as part of the application but will not be attributable, except with the expressed permission of the person quoted. If the application review and reference check is approved, then the applicant can be invited for an interview. Interviews may be held virtually or in person and will be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time between the applicant and Membership Task Force.

Members of the Team will be informed of the application and encouraged to review the applicant's suitability for membership. Team members

will be given the opportunity to comment to the Membership Task Force prior to the interview of the applicant.

Upon completion of interviews for open Peer Support Team positions, the Membership Task Force will then make a recommendation to the Team Leader, Assistant Team Leader and Lead Clinician for review of applicant for acceptance or rejection. The new member must have Stress First Aid training prior to responding on any activations.

Once the member is approved, he/she will have a probationary period of a minimum of 12 months, during which he/she must deploy on a minimum of two activations and attend 50% of the required quarterly meetings a year. During probation, all activities during activations and/or activities with the Team will be supervised by current active team members in good standing.

Upon acceptance and prior to any deployment, the new member must sign a Team Member Memorandum of Agreement and Confidentiality statement.

If at any time the probationary member feels he/she is not able to uphold his/her obligation to the team, he/she can withdraw his/her membership without penalty and can reapply later.

D. Maintenance of Membership - It is the sole responsibility of the individual team members to maintain licenses and certifications. Members shall keep the Team Leader and Administrative Team Coordinator informed of current mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number(s). Members must renew the Team Member Memorandum of Agreement and Confidentiality statement annually.

Active participation of all members is essential to the effective operation of ODEMSA's Peer Support Team. To maintain an active status, members must:

- Attend at least 50% scheduled team meetings each year.
- Help present at least one educational session every two years. Clinician members may choose a minimum of four hours of accompanying on-duty emergency providers in lieu of presenting educational sessions.

Any member unable to fulfill the above requirements in a two-year period must provide the Team Leader and Administrative Team Coordinator detail of his/her intent to remain active on the team. A member who has been dropped from active status will be placed on inactive status for a period of not more than two years. Inactive members cannot deploy and forfeit their voting rights with the team.

E. **Suspension of Membership** – The Team Leader, in conjunction with the Lead Clinician, is responsible for members' continued participation on the team and may suspend any member for cause. Examples of for cause include, but are not limited to, breach of confidentiality, violation of policies or procedures, failure to follow the Peer Support Model or procedures, failure to follow sound practices, or other similar actions.

Suspension may be appealed in writing to the ODEMSA Executive Director with copies to the Administrative Team Coordinator and Team Leader. The individual may request a hearing, within 60 calendar days, by a body designated by the Board of Directors. Following the hearing, the decision will be communicated to the Administrative Team Coordinator, Team Leader, and the suspended member.

IV. Training

All members of the ODEMSA Peer Support Team must complete Stress First Aid Awareness within the first 6 months, with a recommendation for suicide prevention training (example ASIST).

For members to stay current with training, team members will need to attend a minimum of 4 hours every 2 years of mental health related training as approved by the Team Leader and Lead Clinician.

V. Confidentiality – Confidentiality is critical in the acceptance and function of the Peer Support Team. All members of the ODEMSA Peer Support Team will hold as privileged any information, facts, descriptions, or perceptions related by an individual participant in any activation response. No member of the team shall share or divulge such privileged information with any other person except in the pursuit of more expert or definitive care as allowed by procedure or with approval by the Team Leader or Lead Clinician. Non-team members may not respond with the Team.

Any violation of confidentiality can lead to dismissal from the ODEMSA Team.

VI. General Information –

A. Requests for Services – Requests for services of the ODEMSA Peer Support Team are made through the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) by calling (804) 674-2400 or 1-800-468-8892.
Virginia EOC has agreed to contact the Administrative Team Coordinator by phone. Team members will not self-dispatch themselves to a request for service. People who call individual team members or the ODEMSA office should be directed to call the Virginia EOC phone number to request a Peer Support Team activation. If the caller has had difficulty reaching the Virginia EOC, contact the Administrative Team Coordinator or ODEMSA's Executive Director.

B. Conflict of Interest – To avoid possible conflict of interest, the ODEMSA Peer Support Team should avoid staffing these interventions with team members who are members of the requesting agency, unless approved by the requesting agency's leadership.

Neither the ODEMSA Peer Support Team nor any of its members will respond to any other region with Virginia Office of EMS, or the Virginia Emergency Operations Center. No member of the team will act as such in any area outside the defined service area of ODEMSA's Planning Districts 13, 14, 15, and 19 without the consent of the Team Leader and Administrative Team Coordinator.

If an individual team member is requested by an agency, that member will notify the Team Leader or Administrative Team Coordinator before proceeding with any interventions. No team member may offer individual services without approval of the Team Leader or the Administrative Team Coordinator.

C. Expense Reimbursement – Service on the ODEMSA's Peer Support Team is voluntary and non-compensable. Team members will be reimbursed for mileage at the current rate paid by ODEMSA when the member officially has been activated in response to an incident. ODEMSA also will pay for or reimburse expenses associated with state required and approved training or continuing education, provided appropriate funding is available. Reimbursement for authorized travel and/or training may be requested by submitting an ODEMSA Peer Support Mileage/Training Reimbursement Form and appropriate documentation.

D. Reporting Requirements – Any intervention or educational session conducted by the team, or any of the team, shall be documented by the Administrative Team Coordinator.

ODEMSA is required by contract with the OEMS/VDH to submit quarterly reports on the Peer Support Team activities. To meet that requirement, careful, complete, and confidential records, including team activations will be kept secure by the Administrative Team Coordinator. Quarterly reports will be prepared by the Administrative Team Coordinator and reviewed by the Team Leader before forwarding the reports to the Executive Director for submission.