

Grant County Fire Protection District 3

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. NUMBER: 5.2.08
2. SUBJECT: ***Behavioral Health and Care Policy***
3. POLICY: Firefighters face psychologically demanding work and routine exposure to traumatic, life-threatening, and emotionally devastating incidents. The cumulative weight of traumatic calls, prolonged exposure, occupational health risks, and the cultural expectations of the fire service create elevated risk for mental health conditions, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders. This policy establishes a structured, compassionate continuum of behavioral health care following a traumatic incident, from immediate on-scene support through peer support, professional counseling, and formal claims processes.
4. SCOPE: This policy applies to all District personnel, including career and volunteer members, who may be exposed to traumatic or high-stress incidents in the performance of their duties.
5. RESPONSIBILITIES:
 - A. The District Fire Chief is responsible for ensuring that this Policy and Procedure is adhered to.
 - B. District officers and supervisors shall support implementation of this policy, ensure members are aware of available resources, and encourage utilization of behavioral health services without stigma or retaliation.
 - C. All personnel are responsible for complying with this Policy and Procedure.
6. PROCEDURE:
 - A. The District shall provide access to behavioral health support following critical incidents and as needed for cumulative stress exposure. This includes, but is not limited to, defusing, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), peer support, chaplain services, professional mental health resources, and assistance with applicable benefit or claim processes.
 - B. The District recognizes that career and volunteer personnel access behavioral health benefits through different statutory systems. Therefore, procedures for accessing services and filing claims shall be administered in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.

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- C. Behavioral health support and response actions shall be initiated as appropriate following qualifying incidents or upon request by any member, officer, or supervisor. The District shall maintain access to trained peer support personnel, regional CISM resources, and referral pathways to licensed mental health professionals familiar with first responder culture.
- D. Detailed procedures for accessing behavioral health support, including step-by-step processes for claims and treatment, are outlined in Appendix A- Behavioral Health Procedures.
- E. All behavioral health interactions, including peer support, CISM participation, and treatment referrals, shall be handled with strict confidentiality in accordance with applicable laws and professional standards. Information shall only be disclosed when necessary to prevent an imminent threat to the member or others.