

Resolution No. 39

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT: Health & Safety

Re: IAFF Peer Support Training Program

1 WHEREAS, early efforts of the fire service to
2 manage impacts of stressful events on the job paved
3 the way for much research and information now
4 available regarding occupational exposure to
5 traumatic events. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
6 (CISD) was widely adopted in the fire service; and

7 WHEREAS, debriefing appeared to be an easily
8 doable, inherently logical approach to helping fire
9 fighters with occupational stress. It was consistent
10 with ideas about dealing with traumatic events
11 generally accepted at that time. Many fire fighters
12 reported that having an opportunity to talk about how
13 they felt seemed helpful. Systematic studies,
14 however, were not conducted or reported until
15 relatively recently; and

16 WHEREAS, widespread use led to rigorous
17 investigation of intervention efficacy by independent
18 researchers in psychology, psychiatry, and public
19 health. Surprisingly to many, the results did not
20 reveal an appreciable preventive effect and in fact
21 suggested that some might actually experience more
22 difficulty resolving their reactions as a result of their
23 participation in these interventions. Authoritative
24 guidelines for early interventions following exposure
25 to traumatic events now recommend against routine
26 debriefing or other procedures incorporating
27 debriefing-like assumptions and approaches; and

28 WHEREAS, researchers in early interventions for
29 traumatic stress joined fire service representatives to

30 develop a straightforward protocol that fire
31 departments can use to ensure that their personnel
32 have access to needed resources following potentially
33 traumatic events. The actions recommended
34 essentially eliminate CISM/CISD and reflect best
35 practices based on current research and should fit
36 easily into operations and support systems most
37 departments have in place. These recommendations
38 are now reflected in NFPA standards; and

39 WHEREAS, IAFF Standing Committee on
40 Labor/Employee Assistance Programs recommended
41 and the IAFF developed and implemented a web
42 based behavioral health training, referral and
43 educational program that also addresses suicide
44 prevention and intervention. The program should
45 include online training, an implementation
46 component, a tool to evaluate local resources,
47 testimonials from IAFF members and links to
48 resources; and

49 WHEREAS, research has demonstrated that peer
50 support has resulted in significant gains in the areas
51 of self-esteem, empowerment, confidence, decision
52 making skills, social and overall functioning, reduced
53 isolation, larger social networks and increased
54 support seeking, greater pursuit of educational goals
55 and employment, and greater capacity to deal with
56 adverse life events; and

57 WHEREAS, the IAFF Standing Committee on
58 Labor/Employee Assistance Programs recommended
59 and the IAFF develop a peer support training
60 program; and

61 WHEREAS, the IAFF researched and reviewed
62 all peer support training programs available at the

63 time and determined that the best approach would be
64 to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based peer
65 support training program to include lecture, video
66 scenarios and participant role play scenarios so
67 participants can apply the skills and protocols
68 delivered during the training; and

69 WHEREAS, the IAFF sought and received
70 funding from the Department of Homeland Security
71 to develop a comprehensive peer support training
72 program; and

73 WHEREAS, the IAFF began developing the peer
74 support training program in 2015; and

75 WHEREAS, to lay a foundation for the IAFF Peer
76 Support Training, participants must complete the
77 online IAFF Behavioral Health Awareness Course.
78 The two-hour course is self-paced and tailored for the
79 fire service; and

80 WHEREAS, the IAFF Peer Support Training
81 Program is a two-day interactive course taught by
82 experienced peers from the fire service and
83 behavioral health clinicians that focuses on active
84 listening skills, suicide awareness and prevention,
85 crisis intervention, referrals to local resources and
86 relationships with local behavioral health providers;
87 and

88 WHEREAS, instructors use small group learning
89 methods and skill-building exercises to encourage
90 student participation, mastery of the material and
91 participants learn how to build an effective peer
92 program; and

93 WHEREAS, the IAFF has completed more than
94 50 Peer Support Training deliveries that resulted in
95 more than 4,500 IAFF members, from more than 100

96 affiliates, representing nearly 100,000 IAFF
97 members trained in the IAFF Peer Support Training
98 Program; and

99 WHEREAS, it is the position of the IAFF that all
100 affiliates should have access to a peer team who has
101 competed the IAFF Peer Support Training Program;
102 therefore be it

103 RESOLVED, That the International Association
104 of Fire Fighters, recognize, support and encourage
105 the adoption of the IAFF Peer Support Training
106 Program at all departmental, local, state, provincial,
107 national and private training agencies; and be it
108 further

109 RESOLVED, That all affiliates recognize, support
110 and encourage the adoption of the IAFF Peer Support
111 Training Program.

Submitted by: IAFF Executive Board

Cost Estimate: None

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Adopt

CONVENTION ACTION: Adopted