



## MONTANA STATE PRISON OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

Procedure:	<b>MSP 4.5.63 INMATE PEER MENTOR PROGRAM</b>	
Effective Date:	07/02/2024	Page 1 of 4
Revision Date(s):		
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### I. Purpose:

Inmate Peer Mentors provide support to inmates who are severely mentally ill and/or at risk for suicide, as well as other inmates in need of assistive support. Inmate Peer Mentors are a supplement to security staff and do not take the place of staff security requirements.

### II. Definitions:

**Direct and Continuous Observation** – Continuous observation of a suicidal or self-injurious prisoner placed on observation. Cameras can be used but only in addition to a staff member.

**Inmate Peer Mentor** – An inmate selected and trained by staff to support SMI inmates and those placed on Suicide Watch. Mentors may be used to supplement the 15-minute random and staggered cell front checks conducted by staff during Close Watch. The use of a Peer Mentor does not substitute or diminish any required observation of the inmate by staff.

**Inmate Peer Mentor Hiring Panel** – For the purpose of this procedure, the hiring panel will be composed of the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee, housing unit Lieutenant or designee, and case manager for assigned unit. They will interview inmates interested in the position once they have passed the screening.

**Mental Health Emergency** – Prisoner behavior which is inappropriate due to mental illness such as a thought disorder or a major mood disorder, attempted suicide, or self-injury and which demonstrates a high risk for immediate danger to self, others, or serious destruction of property.

**Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP)** – Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric social workers, psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychiatric nurses, licensed professional counselors, licensed clinical social workers, and others who, by virtue of their education, credentials, and experience, are permitted by law to evaluate and care for mental health needs of patients, including Department staff and contracted or fee-for-service professionals. This definition excludes Mental Health Technicians.

### III. Procedures:

#### A. Inmate Peer Mentor

1. The role of the Inmate Peer Mentor is to serve as a support to at-risk inmates and may be involved in, but not limited to, the following tasks when assigned to an inmate on suicide watch:
  - a. communicating with the at-risk inmate;
  - b. reading to the at-risk inmate materials approved by the QMHP;
  - c. notifying staff of the at-risk inmate's needs;
  - d. sitting quietly with the at-risk inmate and offering companionship;

- e. monitoring the at-risk inmate every 5 minutes and reporting any concerns to the security staff;
  - f. maintaining a constant direct line of sight of the inmate that is on watch;
  - g. recording observations in the suicide watch log provided for Inmate Peer Mentors; and
  - h. participating in regular debriefings and trainings.
2. Inmate Peer Mentors also provide peer support either individually or in groups to assigned inmates for such activities as:
    - a. recreation/exercise;
    - b. social skills development;
    - c. reading;
    - d. hobbies;
    - e. meals;
    - f. education classes; and
    - g. hygiene instruction/ADLs
  3. When Inmate Peer Mentors provide support and assistance, they may not physically touch the supported inmate at any time.
  4. Inmate Peer Mentors may not assist with bathing, feeding, dressing, and grooming. In addition, Inmate Peer Mentors may not assist in an inmate's health or legal matters. Inmate Peer Mentors will notify staff if the supported inmate needs immediate assistance with these activities.
  5. Inmate Peer Mentors may assist in the scheduling and escorting of an assigned inmate's appointments, as well as assisting in meal preparation.

## **B. Inmate Peer Mentor Criteria and Eligibility**

1. Notices may be issued at any time announcing the opportunity for interested inmates to apply to become an Inmate Peer Mentor.
2. All interested inmates will submit an Inmate Peer Mentor application to the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee.
3. All qualified applicants will be reviewed by the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee and participate in an interview with the Inmate Peer Mentor Hiring Panel.
4. Prospective Inmate Peer Mentors must meet the following criteria:
  - a. have a GED or high school diploma;
  - b. have been at MSP for a minimum of 9 months;
  - c. have at least one year left on sentence;
  - d. have clear conduct the past 12 months;
  - e. have not been on watch, attempted suicide, or engaged in self-harmful behaviors within the last 12 months; if on psychotropic medications, must be medication-compliant;
  - f. be Case Plan compliant;
  - g. cleared by Investigations, PREA, Security Threat Group, Housing, and Case Management staff; and
  - h. deemed clinically appropriate by a QMHP to become an Inmate Peer Mentor.
5. The onsite Mental Health Manager or designee exercises the right to make exceptions for allowing or not allowing an inmate to become an Inmate Peer Mentor.
6. Once hired, the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee will complete the Job Assignment Form and submit it to the Placement Office. If approved, the Inmate Peer Mentor will be placed on the Movement Sheet and notified.

### C. Training of Inmate Peer Mentors

1. All prospective Inmate Peer Mentors will receive 8 hours of initial training. The successful Inmate Peer Mentor must have a minimum passing score of 80% on the examination to be eligible.
2. Inmate Peer Mentors will receive 4 hours of ongoing training annually.
3. The onsite Mental Health Manager/designee will maintain training records.
4. Training topics will include:
  - a. Signs of suicide, responding to a suicidal inmate
  - b. Setting boundaries
  - c. Self-care
  - d. Active Listening
  - e. Confidentiality
  - f. Ethics and values
  - g. Conduct and professionalism
  - h. Assertiveness and teamwork
  - i. Observant and alert
  - j. Integrity
  - k. Definition and Symptoms of Severely Mentally Ill (SMI)
  - l. Understanding psychotropic medications and side effects
  - m. Motivational Interviewing
  - n. Core Correctional Practices
  - o. De-escalation techniques

### D. Supervision of Inmate Peer Mentors

1. The onsite Mental Health Manager or designee will be responsible for the overarching clinical supervision of Inmate Peer Mentors.
2. An Inmate Peer Mentor shift shall generally be four to six hours in length, but in unusual circumstances, shall not exceed eight hours in a 24-hour period. The use of an Inmate Peer Mentor does not substitute or diminish any required observation of the inmate by staff.
3. The On Duty Sergeant and/or Housing Unit Lieutenant or designee will be responsible for direct supervision of Inmate Peer Mentors.
4. Evaluation of Inmate Peer Mentors will be conducted by the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee in consultation with security staff (housing unit and working unit) every 90 days. (See *DOC 5.1.1 Inmate Assignments* for information on evaluation requirements).
  - a. Evaluation can be conducted sooner on a case-by-case basis.
  - b. Evaluations will be documented in the Inmate Peer Mentor file and be given to the unit to go in the Unit File.
5. The onsite Mental Health Manager or designee will meet with Inmate Peer Mentors either individually or in a group setting no less than once per month for ongoing feedback and supervision.
6. The onsite Mental Health Manager or designee will work in consultation with security staff to assign Inmate Peer Mentors to work with inmates when referrals are made for an Inmate Peer Mentor.
7. The onsite Mental Health Manager or designee will coordinate the Inmate Peer Mentors into teams for Suicide Watch, covering 4 shifts of 6 hours throughout a 24-hour block of time:

- a. The onsite Mental Health Manager or designee will notify the Inmate Peer Mentor teams when coverage is needed. If an assigned Inmate Peer Mentor is unable to fulfill the time commitment, backup Peer Mentors will fill that time slot.
8. During a suicide watch, security staff or designated staff will supervise the Inmate Peer Mentor as well as the inmate who is on suicide watch by conducting checks at random intervals not to exceed 15 minutes.

#### **E. Termination/Suspension**

1. Only the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee or On Duty Supervisor of Housing Unit has the authority to suspend an Inmate Peer Mentor.
2. Any staff member may contact the onsite Mental Health Manager to explain any concerns and actions the staff member would like to see taken.
3. The onsite Mental Health Manager will consider the complaint and take any appropriate actions including but not limited to warnings, suspension, or termination.
4. Any Inmate Peer Mentor with a complaint or concern may either bring it to the onsite Mental Health Manager or send an HSR requesting an appointment to discuss the issue.
5. Based on the decision of the onsite Mental Health Manager or designee, immediate suspension and subsequent termination of an Inmate Peer Mentor shall include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Receipt of any class 2 rule violation or a major rule infraction
  - b. Possession or use of dangerous contraband
  - c. Refusing to report to the work position or absenteeism
  - d. Theft from the work area
  - e. Unauthorized use of any computer, telephone, etc.
  - f. Unit team recommendation
  - g. Inadequate performance in the position
  - h. Safety violations
  - i. Suspected abuse or inappropriate touching of supported inmate
  - j. Performing unauthorized tasks for the supported inmate or on that inmate's behalf
6. The Inmate Peer Mentor has the right to terminate their job at any time without consequence.

#### **IV. References**

- A. *DOC 5.1.1 Inmate Assignments*