

**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES**



**Report on the Connecticut Department of Public Safety,
Division of State Police**

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

STOPS

(State Troopers Offering Peer Support)

December 2008

**Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D.
Commissioner
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And Addiction Services**

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This report was prepared in response to Section 17a-485g
of the Connecticut General Statutes

*The title page graphic: The Connecticut Department of Public Safety,
Division of State Police STOPS Logo*

December 2008

Dear Committee Members:

It is hard to believe that, within the time frame of one biennial budget, the Department of Public Safety's (DPS) newly established peer support program, State Troopers Offering Peer Support (STOPS), could achieve such success. At the outset, I'd like to say that it has been a privilege for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to assist DPS in this endeavor. We are mindful of the range of possible behavioral health consequences associated with frequent exposure to traumatic events and prolonged stress. To be afforded the opportunity to serve Connecticut State Troopers in this small way has truly been rewarding.

It was clear from the beginning that our State Troopers, as a group, harbor a deep and abiding concern for each other's well-being. We at DMHAS have been so impressed by the generosity of spirit exhibited by the seventy or so Troopers who have stepped forward to invest their time, genuine concern and talent for the betterment of their fellow Troopers. In effect, the STOPS program is a new social structure through which the daily practice of mutual support both creates and strengthens a sense of community.

In reading this report you will appreciate that STOPS has been a catalyst that has led to the development of additional services not contemplated in the legislation. This is not surprising. STOPS has achieved early success because the entire DPS community acknowledged its promise and supported its development. It is this community awareness that has made it possible for STOPS to serve as a mechanism through which other identified community needs may be met.

DMHAS is grateful for having had the opportunity to assist DPS in establishing peer support services within the Department. And we are grateful for the strong support provided by Commissioner Danaher and the DPS management team, the leadership within the Connecticut State Police Union, and the Troopers and their families throughout the process. We are confident that in the coming months and years, the DPS STOPS program will prove its value to Troopers and their families in countless and, perhaps, unforeseen ways. We look forward to continuing to assist the brave men and women of the DPS community in any way we can.

Kindest regards,

Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D.
Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

December 2008

Dear Committee Members:

I am delighted to be able to join in introducing this report regarding a Connecticut State Police peer counseling program developed with the invaluable assistance of Commissioner Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D, of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. This program, known within the Department of Public Safety as State Troopers Offering Peer Support (“STOPS”), has developed with extraordinary rapidity and effectiveness over the past 18 months.

The STOPS program has provided counseling and assistance to Connecticut State Troopers who are confronted, on a daily basis, with pressures and stresses that, if not addressed, could prove debilitating. Troopers see motor vehicle fatalities on a regular basis, they respond to instances of suicide, and they encounter situations in which children are grievously injured or killed. They are constantly on high alert because the nature of their work brings them into contact with, not only the general citizenry, but also the criminal element, and it is frequently impossible to know which encounter will result in placing their own security at risk.

The STOPS program, headed by a dedicated Connecticut State Police Sergeant, Troy Anderson, has, over the past 18 months, trained more than 70 Troopers who voluntarily serve as STOPS counselors. They have had contact with hundreds of Troopers who have sought their assistance. This is a remarkable state of affairs, in view of the fact that the STOPS program is, for the most part, still in its infancy.

The worth of the program has shown itself in unexpected ways. A recent expansion of the STOPS program is a Veterans program, intended to address the special issues affecting members of law enforcement who have been deployed by the military and who, following their deployment, seek to reintegrate themselves into their work as law enforcement officers. Further, the Department’s Critical Incident Stress Management Team has become operational. This team is comprised of twenty Troopers who have received advanced training in assisting Troopers who have been exposed to traumatic events in the course of their work.

The success of the STOPS program has caused the Department to begin to determine whether a similar program might be created for retirees from DPS, for the management at DPS, and also for the civilian employees at DPS.

Many people participated in bringing the STOPS program to its current level of success. It is our expectation that this program will continue to grow and prosper, and we are grateful to all who have played a part in its development.

Sincerely,

John A. Danaher III
Commissioner
Department of Public Safety

- *Members of the STOPS Steering Committee have consistently observed that the “very best among our members” have stepped forward to become Peer Support Volunteers.*
- *We honor fellow Connecticut State Troopers who are Citizen Soldiers by assuring that when called to active duty in the military, they, and their families, are supported throughout the deployment cycle.*
- *The Family Support Program strives to foster a sense of community among Troopers and their families by assuring that in times of crisis, each receives the support they need to fully recover.*
- *Well over 400 Connecticut Troopers accessed support from their peers through STOPS, an amazing achievement for a program in its first year.*
- *The Department of Public Safety has clearly demonstrated its commitment to recognizing, honoring and supporting our fellow Troopers who serve our state, and also our nation through their service in the military.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006 the Connecticut Legislature instructed that peer counseling services be established within the Connecticut Department of Public Safety (DPS), Division of State Police. The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) was assigned the responsibility of implementing program services, in collaboration with DPS.

STOPS (State Troopers Offering Peer Support): THE FIRST YEAR

Fostering a community of mutual support and caring, STOPS provides:

- **PEER COUNSELING SERVICES** that are confidential and are accessible statewide during on-duty and off-duty hours
- **MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM** which assures that Troopers who are Citizen Soldiers are recognized and honored for their service by supporting them and their families throughout the deployment cycle (pre-, during, post-deployment).
- **FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM** that mobilizes needed emotional support and financial assistance in times of personal crises
- **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT** services provided by regionally-based, credentialed teams
- **ENHANCED ACCESS TO CHAPLAINCY SERVICES** and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through the leadership of, and encouragement from, dedicated peer counselors

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

STOPS Program: October 2007 to October 2008

- In a 12 month period, 70 Peer Support Volunteers were screened, trained and credentialed (Appendix A)
- 437 Troopers accessed peer counseling services
- A total of 714 peer-to-peer contacts occurred
- 245 peer contacts occurred during off-duty hours
- 377 received peer support for matters relating to personal or job stress
- 147 received support for family or relationship matters
- 83 Troopers benefited from direct referral to the Employee Assistance Program

STOPS has served as a catalyst leading to the development of new programs and services in the department which include:

- A formal approach to recognize, honor and support Citizen Soldiers within DPS – the *Military Support Program*
- The creation of a *Family Support Program* to support Troopers and their families through periods of personal crisis
- The introduction of regional *Critical Incident Crisis Management (CISM) Teams*
- A renewed and strengthened department *Chaplaincy Program*

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Finding

Studies depict clearly the connections between violence and trauma and the trauma-related psychological injuries that may ensue. It is common knowledge that police work also entails routine exposure to traumatic events. Noted in the literature is the pervasive influence of stigma within para-military organizations which can be a formidable barrier to accessing needed services.

Recommendation

Efforts to normalize access to needed support services in the aftermath of traumatic events or exposure to prolonged stress should continue through education at all levels and through continued support and encouragement of department leadership.

2. Finding

Cognizant of reports of difficulties experienced by many servicemen and women during their homecoming transition, the STOPS Program recognized the need to support Citizen Soldiers now exchanging one uniform for another. DPS developed the Military Support Program (MSP), designed to recognize and honor Connecticut State Troopers who are Citizen Soldiers by assuring that when called to active duty in the military, they, and their families, would receive the support they need throughout the deployment cycle.

Recommendation

That DPS broadly disseminate the lessons of the agency's new Military Support Program to law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

3. Finding

With strong support from DPS Commissioner Danaher, the STOPS Program has added new program initiatives beyond its core function of providing peer counseling services. The Military Support Program, Family Support Program and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) initiatives were implemented in response to identified needs within the department. The successful implementation of the STOPS Program has prompted suggestion that peer support services be expanded to other areas within DPS. Specifically, it has been recommended that peer support counseling services be made available to division managers as well as to civilians within the department.

Recommendation

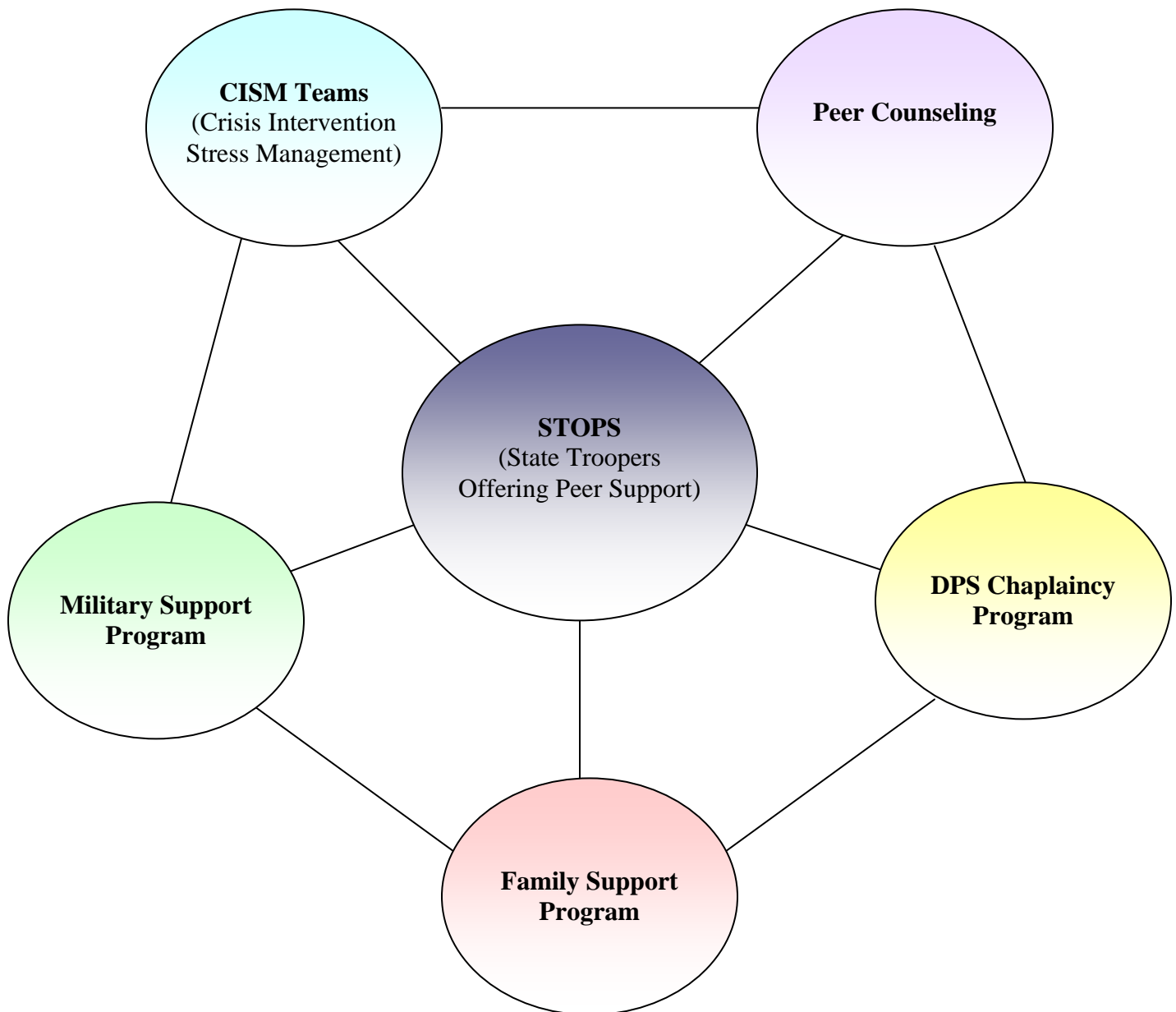
It is apparent that as STOPS becomes stronger and more successful, more roles and responsibilities may be assumed by the STOPS Program. Staffing levels must remain apace the demands of the work.

4. Finding

Well over 400 Connecticut Troopers accessed support from their peers through STOPS, an amazing achievement for a program in its first year. The STOPS Program has been a catalyst which has encouraged development of new initiatives to address identified needs within the DPS community.

Recommendation

Necessary steps should be taken to sustain and expand the DPS STOPS Program. Moreover, information regarding the STOPS Program should be disseminated broadly throughout law enforcement in Connecticut so that local police departments may choose to replicate the STOPS model.



INTRODUCTION

In the past year, the Connecticut Department of Public Safety (DPS), Division of State Police entered the ranks of states that have opted to provide Peer Support Programs for their sworn officers.

Public safety personnel are exposed daily to a variety of potentially traumatic events, including human tragedies such as abused and distressed children, the aftermath of domestic violence, horrific motor vehicle accidents, disturbing crime scenes, disasters, and acts of terrorism (Clark and Haley, 2007). A recent book on police officer stress sums up significant trauma-related problems associated with police work: Police officers are 30% more likely to experience health problems than other personnel, three times more likely to experience disrupted family life which may involve abuse of their spouses, five times more likely to abuse alcohol, six times more likely to experience anxiety, ten times more likely to be depressed, yet sadly, they are the least likely of most occupational group members to seek help (Stevens, 2008).

Around the country, peer-to-peer programs are developing to address the known psychological and health effects upon police officers routinely exposed to trauma. In 2006 the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation to establish a peer counseling pilot initiative within the Division of State Police*.

* The suggestion that Connecticut establish a peer support program was first made in a letter to the editor written by a state police sergeant.

SECTION I: THE STOPS PROGRAM (State Troopers Offering Peer Support)

Section 17a-485g. Pilot program for certain health care professionals. Pilot state police peer-counseling program. Report. (a) On or before October 1, 2007, the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, within available appropriations set forth in section 52 of public act 06-188* and in consultation with the Community Mental Health Strategy Board established under section 17a-485b, shall establish and implement (1) a pilot program for general pediatric, family medicine and geriatric health care professionals to improve their ability to identify, diagnose, and refer and treat patients with mental illness, and (2) a pilot program of peer-counseling in the Division of State Police.

(b) On or before January 1, 2009, the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services shall evaluate the pilot programs established under section (a) of this section and shall submit a report of the commissioner's findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a.

*Note: Section 52 of public act 06-188 is special in nature and therefore has not been codified but remains in full force and effect according to its terms.

History: P.A. 06-188 effective July 1, 2006.

In recognition of the occupational hazards and associated psychological challenges faced by State Police within the Department of Public Safety DPS, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted Public Act 06-188, An Act Concerning Social Services and Public Health Budget Implementation Provisions, Section 31 of which stipulates that the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), within available appropriations, and in consultation with the Community Mental Health Strategy Board, will establish and implement a pilot program of peer counseling in the DPS Division of State Police.

DMHAS representatives collaborated with the DPS executive, union administrators and State Troopers to develop STOPS, a peer support program designed to provide:

- mutual support among sworn officers
- accessible, confidential peer counseling support services statewide
- timely and confidential peer support to officers affected by critical incidents
- encouragement to connect to support services, including professional counseling, when warranted.

The goal of the Peer Support Program is to provide all sworn officers the opportunity to receive tangible peer support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help anticipate and address the daily stress of law enforcement work. Confidential assistance is provided through a network of Peer Support Volunteers (PSV's) who are specially trained to respond to requests for support from fellow officers.

Confidentiality is a valued principle in the provision of peer support activities and is recognized as an imperative practice necessary to assure the success of the program. The experience of well functioning peer programs for law enforcement departments around the nation shows that, without an assurance of confidentiality, staff will not utilize essential programs. PSV's may not disclose communications (with exceptions), may not keep written notes or records of communications, may not be compelled to disclose information to any other Department member, and may not be classified as a "witness" or a "subject" during Internal Affairs investigations for Peer Support activities. Exceptions to confidentiality are strictly limited to legally-mandated reporting and disclosure to manage imminent risk.

Implementing Peer Support Services

DMHAS was charged with the responsibility of assisting DPS in establishing peer support services within the Division of State Police. It is important to acknowledge that the initial success of the STOPS Program is directly related to the strong support demonstrated for the program by DPS leadership. Throughout the implementation phase, and continuing today, Commissioner Danaher has closely monitored program developments and has remained open and supportive regarding suggestions for new service components in response to identified needs.

As a first step toward implementing a peer counseling approach within DPS, an informal, informational meeting was held that was attended by leadership from DMHAS, DPS and the Connecticut State Police Union. This meeting led to a Symposium on Peer Support which was held at the State Police Union headquarters in East Hartford. Attending the symposium were the DMHAS and DPS Commissioners, State Police Union representatives, and rank and file members of DPS. The legislative intent to establish peer counseling services within DPS was presented, with both Commissioners offering their full support and intention to create such a program. During the meeting DPS members were polled to determine their individual interest in becoming members of the Peer Support Steering Committee. Interested members were asked to submit a letter of interest along with a detailed synopsis of their training and experience in the field of Peer Support. From those submissions, a five-member Steering Committee was formed. Over the next 10 months this committee comprised of DMHAS, DPS management, State Police Union and rank and file DPS personnel met once per month for four hours at a time to discuss program guidelines and establish policy.

A major initial focus was to determine how the introduction of peer support services might be viewed and to develop an approach to enlist support within the agency. This proved to be a challenge as police culture, in general, tends to place high value on self-sufficiency, and fosters a culture wherein a Trooper's asking for assistance may be viewed as a sign of personal weakness.

The Steering Committee began research into *best practice* peer support models throughout the nation. Prominent peer support programs evaluated included the Pennsylvania State Police MAP Program, the New York City Police POPA Program, the Arizona Highway Patrol Peer Support Program, and the Chicago Police Employee

Assistance Program. Members of the committee reached out to these programs for assistance and direction. Some of these programs had been providing assistance to their members for more than twenty years.

From that research, the committee was able to build a foundation in which to establish a program customized to the unique needs of the Connecticut State Police. Through research of these other programs, it became evident that a full time Peer Support Coordinator position would be required to accomplish the following duties:

- serve as an ambassador of the Peer Support Program within DPS
- manage day-to-day program activities
- develop and implement identified stress management workshops and trainings in response to identified concerns
- serve as a liaison to the Steering Committee
- recruit peer support applicants
- coordinate training of peer support volunteers
- maintain statistical data
- assure timely response to 24 hour emergencies
- visit Troops and Units to distribute literature and discuss the program
- conduct inquiries into potential confidentiality breaches
- arrange debriefings following critical incidents
- oversee the development of new program initiatives, as well as the development of attendant goals, policies and objectives
- network with other law enforcement agencies
- implement new supervisor and recruit trainings
- coordinate services with department Chaplains
- develop and maintain a peer support intranet site
- maintain active peer support lists.

Once a Peer Support model was decided upon, the next phase of the process was to seek out an agency which would provide training to the Peer Support Counselors. The group that was identified was CABLE (Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement). This group currently provides statewide training to law enforcement for CIT (Crisis Intervention Training). CABLE is staffed by a cadre of clinicians and retired members of the Connecticut law enforcement community and has a history of providing education through leadership and sound principles. CABLE met with the Steering Committee and subsequently established an agreed upon 40 hour curriculum which consisted of police suicide prevention training, Critical Incident Stress Management (ICISF Model), active listening, behavioral health concepts, and allocation of mental health resources. It should be noted that DPS currently contracts an outside vendor for clinical counseling services (Public Safety EAP). This group was also consulted during the planning of training activities, and was recruited to present on the full-range of EAP services.

In May 2007 the Steering Committee announced the first training class for the STOPS Program (State Troopers Offering Peer Support). Interested applicants consisting of State Police Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants had to meet criteria established by the

committee. Each member was asked to submit a detailed application, performance evaluations from the previous two years, along with a written recommendation from their supervisor. Each applicant was then interviewed by a panel that consisted of representatives from the State Police Union, DMHAS and other Steering Committee members.

Three training classes were conducted over a twelve month period, and today there are more than 70 STOPS counselors stationed throughout the state of Connecticut. The geographical locations of applicants were considered during the selection process to ensure an appropriate number of personnel from each Troop, Unit and work station. Demographics were also studied with an eye toward creating the most diverse group of peer supporters taking into consideration age, gender and ethnicity. In addition, selected members established that they demonstrated the qualities sought in an effective peer supporter such as compassion, leadership and open mindedness.

In July of 2007, the position of the STOPS Coordinator was announced to eligible state police personnel. The position was opened to all Troopers, Sergeants and Master Sergeants. The selection process was unique in that DPS Commissioner John Danaher transferred the screening process solely to the STOPS Steering Committee. Each applicant was asked to submit a detailed resume, supervisor recommendation and yearly performance evaluation reports. The final step of the selection process was oral interviews consisting of the questions relating to managing a program at a “grass roots” level and specific program goals. The Steering Committee panel was comprised of DMHAS members and DPS Troopers and Sergeants. Following interviews held on September 5, 2007, a coordinator was selected and the name was delivered to Commissioner Danaher for review and final approval.

On October 1, 2007 DPS STOPS Program went into operation. The program, supported by a solid and comprehensive policy, was unveiled during an Office of Field Operations meeting by Commissioner John Danaher. At that time, the Commissioner offered his full support of the STOPS Program. He then authored a letter to every member of the DPS wherein he discussed the program benefits and the selection of the Coordinator position.

Members of the Steering Committee have consistently observed that the “very best among our members” have stepped forward to become PSV’s.

During the past 18 months, the selected Program Coordinator, Sgt. Troy Anderson, has developed relationships with other public safety-operated peer support programs, conducted significant research nationally to determine strengths inherent in other state’s programs, and has served as an *internal ambassador* within the Division of State Police. We would like to recognize the leadership provided by Sgt. Troy Anderson during the program’s implementation phase. Through his dedication and sustained effort STOPS has, in a remarkably short period, become a valuable tool frequently utilized by Troopers throughout the state.

Today, 70 Peer Support Volunteers (PSV) provide confidential, timely, locally-available peer counseling services to their fellow Troopers. Any sworn member of the department may request peer support for any personal problem or issue which may affect job performance or quality of life. A PSV may be contacted directly or through the Program Coordinator. Any concerned department member may request support on behalf of a fellow trooper. Volunteers may also be activated following a critical incident to provide support and possible referrals for additional assistance to involved Troopers. At no time shall a PSV be utilized as a method to deter misconduct, generate internal complaints, or to impose discipline.

PSV's are well versed in confidentiality parameters, relevant department policies, collegial roles and boundaries, the dichotomy between the role of a PSV and behavioral health professionals, the EAP referral process, and how to access alternative community resources. Subsequent advanced training is relevant to issues identified among Troopers accessing the peer support process, responsive to the needs of PSV's, and supports continued skill development.

STOPS PROGRAM BUDGET

P.A. 06-188 appropriated the sum of \$250,000 for the purposes of implementing pilot projects authorized by the Act. Of this amount, \$100,000 was directed by the Connecticut Mental Health Strategy Board to DMHAS for the purpose of implementing the STOPS Program. The allocation is non-lapsing.

DPS has committed one (1) in-kind full-time staff person to the program. The majority of the \$100,000 allocation supported the provision of three, five-day core trainings for a total of 70 new PSV's. In spring 2008, a balance of \$19,500 was directly provided by DMHAS to DPS in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) that expires June 30, 2009. The purpose of the funds is to cover costs associated with ongoing PSV education and training activities.

FOSTERING A COMMUNITY OF MUTUAL SUPPORT AND CARING.....

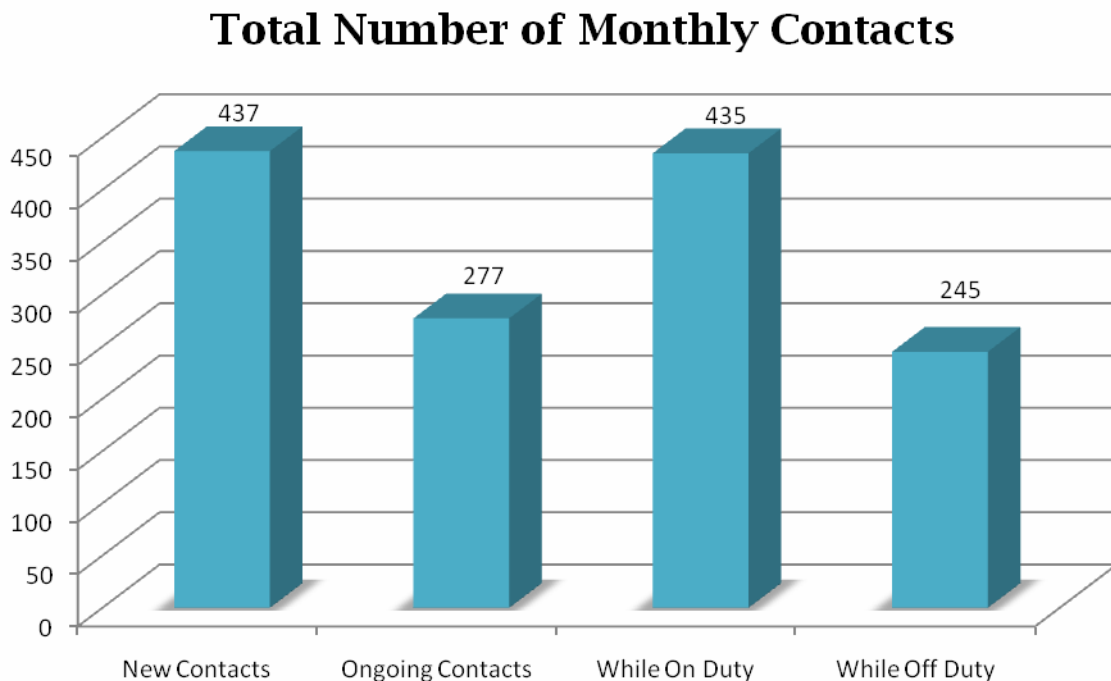
STOPS PROVIDES:

- ***PEER COUNSELING SERVICES*** that are confidential and are accessible statewide during on-duty and off-duty hours
- ***MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM*** which assures that Troopers who are Citizen Soldiers are recognized and honored for their service by supporting them and their families throughout the deployment cycle
- ***FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM*** that mobilizes needed emotional support and financial assistance in times of personal crises
- ***CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT*** services provided by regionally-based, credentialed teams
- ***ENHANCED ACCESS TO CHAPLAINCY SERVICES*** and EAP through the leadership of, and encouragement from, dedicated peer counselors

A. STOPS PEER COUNSELING SERVICES

The STOPS Program provides statewide, confidential peer counseling services to Connecticut State Troopers through a cadre of 70 trained Peer Support Volunteers. PSV's received comprehensive training that included overview of salient research in the behavioral health issues associated with police work; the prevalence of depression, anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorders among sworn officers; the signs, symptoms, prevention strategies and intervention techniques relating to suicidality; critical incident stress management; crisis intervention and communication skills. PSV's training also included didactic and experiential exercises in a range of peer-to-peer scenarios. Specific attention was given to the principles of individual trust, confidentiality and adherence to ethical boundaries. Members of the Steering Committee have consistently observed that the "very best among our members" have stepped forward to become PSV's. This sentiment is reflected in feedback heard throughout the department.

During the first full year of operation, the STOPS Program has enjoyed exceptional usage by the men and women of the state police. As shown on the chart below, 437 members have had the courage to reach out to STOPS Peer Support Volunteers to discuss issues affecting their individual quality of life. In addition, 277 ongoing contacts were noted during this same year period. The term *ongoing contact* relates to an issue that carries over from one month to another. Data regarding whether the STOPS Team member was on-duty or off-duty during the provision of peer assistance is also gathered. The numbers below show that while the majority of the contacts were made during on-duty time, there were still a large amount of issues addressed during off-duty time. It should be noted that STOPS Team members serve on a fully voluntary basis and are not compensated for off duty STOPS work.



In the past year, the majority of peer support contacts related to either personal (23%) or job (30%) stress. Twenty-one percent (21%) of all contacts involved issues relating to family life or personal relationships. A total of 83 individuals, or 11%, were directly referred to the Employee Assistance Program (see Table 1).

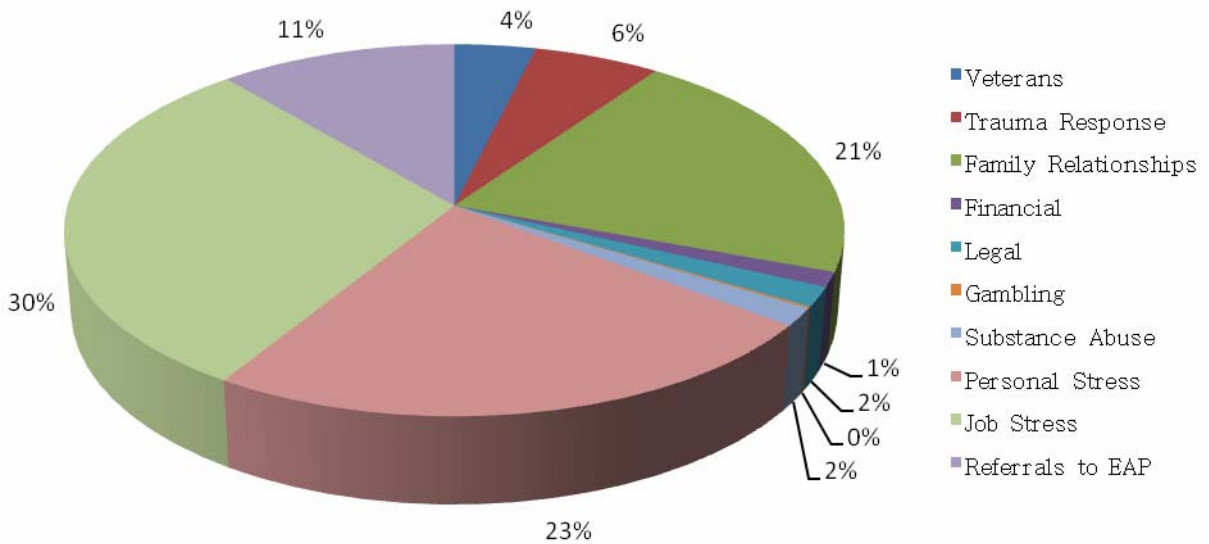
STOPS: First Year Performance

Total Contacts:	714	
While on duty:	435	61%
While off duty:	245	39%
Trauma-related:	42	6%
Family matters:	147	21%
Financial:	9	1%
Legal:	12	2%
Substance use:	11	2%
Personal stress:	166	23%
Job stress:	211	30%
Veterans:	27	4%
Referrals to EAP:	83	11%

Period: October 1, 2007 to October 31, 2008

Table 1

Types of Contacts



In April 2008, following the creation of the Veterans component of the STOPS Program, a new service category that tracks services provided to military veterans was added to the STOPS monthly report of peer contacts. Twenty-four (24) veterans were served during the first 5 months of the veterans' initiative.

B. MILITARY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Cognizant of reports of the difficulties experienced by many servicemen and women during their homecoming transition, and after seeing evidence of those difficulties in two newly returned Troopers, the STOPS Program recognized the need to support Citizen Soldiers now exchanging one uniform for another.

These identified difficulties prompted the STOPS Program to again search police agencies nationwide in an effort to seek out active policies which dealt with supporting military personnel affected by deployments. This search revealed that the vast majority of departments did not have written protocol concerning military support.

In December 2007, the STOPS Coordinator approached DPS Commissioner John Danaher with a request for assistance in addressing the needs of Troopers newly returned from active duty military service. Commissioner Danaher authorized a meeting of Troopers affected by mobilization and deployment. Within two weeks, a meeting of 25 veterans – all Citizen Soldiers – was held on the grounds of the State Veterans Home in Rocky Hill, CT. Commissioner Danaher opened the meeting by stating his commitment for Troopers who are veterans, and encouraged attendees to discuss ways to support them and their families.

During the meeting, clinicians from the VA Connecticut Healthcare System provided a comprehensive overview of the prevalent challenges facing military personnel and their families throughout the mobilization and deployment cycle. Particular attention was given to the normal homecoming process during which many veterans experience a range of predictable emotions including depression, irritability, anger, hypervigilance, difficulty sleeping and increased substance use. The overview provided context for a focused discussion among Troopers regarding their unique experiences, including information on what went well, or not so well, during their departure from, and subsequent return to, their work assignments.

Veterans shared personal accounts of their individual experiences regarding pre-deployment issues. The pervasive feeling in the room was that there was a need for uniformity when employees were subject to military deployments. The issues ranged from a lack of family support to the absence of a thoughtful, well-defined work reintegration process. Before the group was dismissed, a group of approximately 15 members volunteered to be part of an ad hoc Veterans Steering Committee to explore what the agency had to date done correctly, and to further address areas for future improvement.

To recognize and honor fellow Connecticut State Troopers who are Citizen Soldiers by assuring that when called to active duty in the military, they, and their families, are supported throughout the deployment cycle.

The Veteran Support Program (VSP) Steering Committee convened once a month for a period of six months in order to create a military support policy for the agency. The committee was comprised of members of the STOPS Program, State Police management and rank and file Troopers. These meetings proved to be fruitful for gathering and processing information related to policy development, and at some level, cathartic for many in attendance.

The Steering Committee closely examined the past practices of the agency regarding deployment in light of their personal experiences. It was felt that structured, universally applied protocols should be adopted to guide leadership in assuring a respectful, supportive pre-deployment and post-deployment experience for soldiers called to active duty.

During the ongoing committee meetings, veterans offered several observations and suggestions that would have been beneficial during their deployments. Along with the suggestions, the veterans cited specific questions that needed to be properly addressed prior to their departure. These questions included but were not limited to the following:

- health insurance benefits
- deferred compensation
- veterans' buy-back of service time for retirement
- vehicle and equipment turn in procedures
- questions about union dues and benefits

Over several meetings, a checklist (The Military Deployment Form: Appendix B) was developed that incorporated the needs of veterans as well as the agency. The deployment form focuses on activities required during a Trooper's planned departure from the force for the purpose of active duty military service, and assures that each soldier is processed in a uniform, respectful and supportive manner.

The Military Deployment Form is utilized in instances when a Trooper's military deployment is expected to last 6 months or longer. The process of completing the form begins one week prior to a soldier's scheduled departure. The Trooper is introduced to the program in a meeting with their assigned Commanding Officer and a supervisor at their work station who has received specialized training as a Military Support Liaison. The Trooper receives an overview of the agency's deployment process and has opportunity to meet with appropriate representatives from various departments. In addition, the Military Support Liaison serves as a point-of-contact for the soldier and for his or her family.

Simply put, the mission of the Military Support Program (MSP) is to recognize and honor fellow Connecticut State Troopers who are Citizen Soldiers by assuring that when called to active duty in the military, they, and their families, receive the support they need

throughout the deployment cycle. Now outlined in agency policy, The STOPS MSP program uniformly provides an array of activities and practices designed to:

- Support Troopers as they prepare to transition into active duty service in the military
- Maintain communication with the deployed Trooper as well as their family members during the period of active duty service
- Support family members by developing and providing programs and activities that are responsive to their needs
- Welcome and support Troopers upon their return from mobilization and deployment, and
- Support Troopers transition into their respective roles within the agency following their active duty service in the military.

During Deployment

Research has shown that the affect on the family unit during a military deployment is significant due to stress brought on by a variety of financial, parenting and household challenges. Additionally, concern for their loved one's safety is ever-present. By ensuring that the family is adequately supported during the time the member is deployed, the agency also supports the deployed member. This support begins prior to activation when the Commanding Officer reaches out to the family by means of an introduction. At that time, the family will be able to determine the frequency of follow-up during the deployment. The family will also be provided with contact information at that time.

Reintegration

The reintegration process begins once the Trooper notifies his Military Support Liaison that he/she is returning from deployment. Following a formal reintegration protocol (The Military Reintegration Form: Appendix C), the Liaison assists the member in his/her transition back to duty. The formal two week reintegration period has the member initially in a light duty status for the first week. During that week, the member again meets with administrative personnel such as Human Resources and Fiscal Services. The member then visits the Training Academy to receive updates, refreshers and range re-qualification. Following that, the process continues with visits to the union, quartermaster, and face-to-face meetings with State Police management.

The second week of the reintegration period has the member in uniform and assigned to a senior member of the agency or supervisor to observe and become re-acclimated to the work flow of day to day operations.

This reintegration period is closely monitored by the Military Support Liaison and the members Commanding Officer. Additionally, the majority of the tasks above require previous scheduling which will be done by the liaison.

To date, over 4,500 Connecticut Citizen Soldiers have been deployed to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (National Guard - 3,700 members and Reserve units – 1,800). Over 70 Connecticut State Police Troopers were among them. Currently, the Connecticut Guard is preparing to mobilize over 1,000 soldiers on a second deployment in Operations

Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. It is certain that military personnel within the ranks of the Connecticut State Police will be among them.

The Department of Public Safety has clearly demonstrated its commitment to recognizing, honoring and supporting our fellow Troopers who serve our state, and also our nation through their service in the military.

C. FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

From the beginning, STOPS has served as a social structure that has helped Troopers translate their concern and support for one another into meaningful activities. Soon after the 70 PSV's were trained and credentialed, it became apparent that STOPS had marshaled a group of effective leaders who, together, would have a greater impact and accomplish more good than could be realized through peer counseling services alone. The Military Support Program, the formation of new Critical Incident Stress Management teams (discussed below) and the Family Support Program (FSP) were borne of such emerging awareness.

The activities of the FSP, while multi-faceted, follow one guiding principle, or value: To foster a sense of community among Troopers and their families by assuring that in times of crisis, each receives the support they need to fully recover.

In the past year, FSP has helped the DPS community come together in response to the following occurrences:

- Families of Troopers deployed in Operations Enduring (Afghanistan) or Iraqi Freedom were supported through the creation of a formal Military Support Policy. This policy established a universal procedure for the proper handling of deployed personnel and their respective family units.
- The sudden, tragic death of Trooper Craig Murray was a shock to all who had the pleasure of knowing him. At the young age of 38 he suffered a life ending cardiac event. His wife Laura and his three children were left in a painful and financially crippling position. STOPS provided guidance and support through a difficult time for Laura and her children. This past summer, DPS fielded 16 teams for a benefit softball tournament held in Craig's memory which raised \$5,400. This money was used by Craig's family to make necessary repairs to the family home.
- Although Troopers, as a group, remain in much better physical shape than their civilian cohort, we are not immune to serious illnesses. In recent months a few of our fellow officers have been affected by cancer and other health problems. STOPS responded by helping organize fund raisers, assisting with family transportation, and by providing compassionate support to the ailing DPS member.
- One Trooper lost his house to fire. He and his family were left with nothing – everything gone. STOPS responded to the scene of the fire and supported the family. The following day, STOPS returned to assist with the cleanup effort and was there for support on an ongoing basis.

- Tragically, a Trooper, who had been living in Florida following her (and her fellow-trooper husband's) retirement committed suicide. STOPS reached out to the Troopers who worked with her and conducted a critical incident debriefing. STOPS included a member of the State Police Chaplaincy Program in the debriefing, and provided additional support at the subsequent memorial service.
- Earlier this year the State Police lost one of their own to suicide. STOPS responded to the scene and provided peer support for the individuals involved in the investigation. Simultaneously, a team of STOPS members was sent to support the family of the trooper upon learning what had occurred. STOPS then provided several critical incident stress management debriefings at various locations for members affected by this tragic loss.

The Family Support Program strives to foster a sense of community among Troopers and their families by assuring that in times of crisis, each receives the support they need to fully recover.

D. CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM) TEAMS

In the course of their assigned duties, State Troopers encounter incidents that may result in varying degrees of psychological and emotional trauma. As stated above, public safety personnel are exposed to a variety of potentially traumatic events, including human tragedies, in the course of their daily routines. DPS policy relating to the STOPS Program lists the following as examples of critical incidents:

- Death of DPS personnel in the line of duty
- Assault on DPS personnel that causes serious or life threatening injury
- DPS personnel involved in a shooting
- Weapon pointed at DPS personnel
- Trooper taken hostage
- Motor vehicle, aircraft or water accident involving a Trooper that results in serious or life threatening injury to the Trooper
- Any incident with multiple fatalities, including accidents, homicides, and natural disasters
- Any incident involving the death of a child
- A motor vehicle accident involving a Trooper that results in the death or serious injury of any person
- Any other incident where a scene supervisor determines that DPS personnel would benefit from CISM techniques.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is an effective and valuable crisis intervention system designed to mitigate the impact of these traumatic incidents on police officers and other emergency responders. CISM is an adaptive, short-term helping process that focuses on assisting individuals affected by a critical incident to return to their daily routines more quickly and with a lessened likelihood of experiencing trauma-related symptoms.

A critical incident stress debriefing is a structured, small-group crisis intervention scheduled typically 2 to 14 days after a critical incident. A team composed of CISM-trained peers facilitates the debriefing. The emphasis is on mitigating distress, facilitating psychological normalization, providing effective stress management education including referral information for needed support, identifying external coping mechanisms, and restoring unit cohesion and performance.

Three regional CISM teams are currently available to assist officers affected by critical incidents. A total of 40 Troopers have been trained in CISM techniques. Since the inception of the program 14 months ago, teams have been deployed 10 times for critical incidents.

E. DPS CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

This past year, Commissioner Danaher took steps to renew and strengthen the DPS Chaplaincy Program. In the spring of 2008 a half-day meeting was attended by 20 clergy members from several religious denominations, as well as representatives from the STOPS Steering Committee. He had arranged for Rabbi Cary A. Friedman, currently with the Federal Bureau of Investigations and author of the book, “Spiritual Survival for Law Enforcement “, to address the gathering. Rabbi Friedman provided an overview of several fundamental principles that guide successful chaplaincy programs, and suggested that chief among them is the simple gift, and art, of listening.

We include mention of the Chaplaincy Program in this report because of its inherent potential value to the Troopers and their family members who access STOPS services. The Chaplaincy Program is a prominent tool available to members of our community. For some, it has been a life line. STOPS Peer Support Volunteers are encouraged to appreciate the importance of spirituality in some Trooper’s lives and how it may be a prominent aspect in their individual healing process.

The STOPS Steering Committee as well as PSV’s throughout the state view the Chaplaincy Program as a component service available to every Trooper in the agency. It is our function and responsibility to assist Troopers’ access to these services.

SECTION II: LESSONS LEARNED

Troopers Access to Services

Noted in the literature is the pervasive influence of stigma, not only within the ranks of military organizations but also among police organizations, which can be a formidable barrier to accessing needed services (Hoge, 2004; Goldstein, 2000). Well over 400 Connecticut Troopers accessed support from their peers through STOPS, an amazing achievement for a program in its first year. We agree with Rabbi Friedman. The simple act of *listening* is often the most powerful and effective support one person may provide another. As PSV’s have learned, listening is not a passive endeavor but rather, an active effort to truly connect with, understand and support another person. It is clear that

officers now serving as PSV's are among the very best in the department. They are true leaders who are making a difference in the lives of their peers and the department in which they serve.

It has been said that dramatic change confounds before it comforts. Historically, members of the military as well as civilian police officers would expect of each other uncommon ability to hold it together in the toughest of moments, to just suck it up. Those who failed were viewed as weak, not cut out for the assignment. Everyone, from the affected officers to friends and co-workers to the department's hierarchy, would deny that a problem existed. If a problem was eventually acknowledged, affected officers would resist seeking help for fear of losing their jobs, being demoted, or having their personal problems exposed for public ridicule. As a group, police officers and supervisors would often protect those officers experiencing difficulties and deny the existence of any problems (Baker, 1996).

Noted in the literature is the pervasive influence of stigma, not only within the ranks of police officers but within military organizations in general, which can be a formidable barrier to accessing needed services. Well over 400 Connecticut Troopers accessed support from their peers through STOPS, an amazing achievement for a program in its first year.

Studies depict clearly the connections between violence and trauma encountered in military combat and the trauma-related psychological injuries that ensue. It is common knowledge that police work also entails routine exposure to traumatic events. Post traumatic stress is an understandable complication of police work. Despite stereotypes that depict police officers as heroic and invincible, about one-third of police officers who are exposed to diverse work-related traumatic events develop significant post traumatic stress symptoms (Dowling, 2005).

It is important to underscore this point. Several recent studies show that among returning soldiers, 17% or so will develop a diagnosis of PTSD. But as many as 50% of returning soldiers report experiencing significant traumatic stress symptoms (irritability, anger, depression, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, increased use of substances) (Tannelin, 2008; Milliken, 2007; DoD, 2007). Findings of a recent DMHAS-sponsored literature review of the behavioral health effects of military service in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom suggest that symptoms of traumatic stress are so common that they may be viewed as a predictable response to war (Pietrzak, 2008). Additionally, we now know that physical changes occur in the brain following exposure to a traumatic event. While PTSD symptoms are commonly understood to be psychological problems, some or all of them may well be related to the physical effects of extreme stress on the brain (Bremner, 2000).

Traumatic stress symptoms following exposure to traumatic events are prevalent, and also beyond one's ability to control. They are normal reactions to abnormal experiences involving extreme stress.

Today, the U.S. Department of Defense acknowledges that a psychological wound sustained in combat is no different than a shell fragment wound or a bullet wound. Both require treatment interventions that must be timely and aggressive. Response trauma-related problems that stem from civilian police work should be viewed no differently.

The Expansion of STOPS' Influence

With strong support from DPS Commissioner Danaher, the STOPS Program has added new program initiatives beyond its core function of providing peer counseling services. The Military Support Program, Family Support Program and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) initiatives were implemented in response to identified needs within the department.

Additionally, the STOPS Coordinator now participates in new recruit training as well as training of new supervisors. It is possible that yearly in-service training activities for the agency may be added to the duties of the Coordinator.

The successful implementation of the STOPS Program has prompted suggestion that peer support services be expanded to other areas within DPS. It has been recommended that peer support counseling services be made available to division managers as well as to civilians within the department. It is apparent that as STOPS becomes stronger and more successful, more roles and responsibilities may be assumed by the STOPS Program.

CONCLUSION

Peer Support Volunteers are the strength and life-blood of the STOPS Program. Their interest and concern for the well-being of their fellow officers translated into over 700 peer contacts during the first year of the program. DPS leadership is to be commended for the support provided to the STOPS Program. In existence just 12 months, and in many respects still evolving as a new entity within the agency, STOPS has clearly demonstrated its value to the department.

The DPS STOPS Program has become much more than the peer counseling effort envisioned in P.A. 06-188. Today STOPS

- serves as a valuable organizational resource that actively participates in new recruit orientations
- provides peer-led response to crises of all types endemic to police work and common among large communities
- informs leadership about issues affecting Trooper well-being
- contemplates the needs of family members in service planning and delivery
- fosters a sense of community, and
- serves as example to other state agencies.

Additionally, STOPS provides valuable input to the agency's new suicide awareness and prevention program which is now taught at the academy during in-service training available to all personnel.

DMHAS acknowledges the leadership provided by DPS Commissioner Danaher and the men and women of the Division of State Police who were actively involved in implementing the STOPS Program. The deep camaraderie and genuine affection among sworn officers in the department is evidenced in the array of supportive services that have been added to the initial program design.

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APPENDIX A
CURRENT LIST OF STOPS TEAM MEMBERS

**CURRENT LIST OF STOPS
PEER SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS**

STOPS Program

Office: (860) 706-5627

Confidential facsimile: (860) 706-5628

Cellular: (860) 335-0105

troy.anderson@po.state.ct.us

STOPS Program Coordinator

Troy Anderson

Troop A

Mary Kate Hayes

Troop B

Edward Capowich

Christopher Villar

Chick Bistany

Troop C

Stephen Davis

Jack Sauve

Christopher Melanson

Troop D

James Heffernan

Mark Juhola

Troop E

John Rich

John Patterson

Craig Fox

Jeffrey McDermott

Troop F

Paul Pederson

Troop G

Michael Davis

William Baer

Troop H

Benjamin Kores

Corrine Sandberg

Michael O'Toole

Doug Sackett

Troop I

John Butkevicius
Sean Connelly
Dean DuBois
Jonathan Owens
Kevin Boulier

Troop K

William Burtis
Steven Bellandese
James Nolting
Kevin Cook
John Thompson
Michael Hassett

Troop L

Alessandro Giannone

Troop W

Donald Jones
Michael Foley

Training Academy

Kathy Teel
Rafael Morales
Clayton Brown
John Ceruti

Headquarters

Gudrun Johnson
Douglas Hall
Christopher Ganzer
Michael Reidy

EDMC

Steven Rief
Frederick Abrams
Pricilla Vining
Chris Burns
Patrick Dragon
Michael Browning

CDMC

Alex Rios

WDMC

Michael DeCesare
David Pandiscia
Paul Luckienchuk
Josh Pattberg

DMV Task Force

Orlando Rodriguez

Homeland Security

Kevin Rafferty

Selections Unit

Wendy Delehanty

Aviation

Stephen Samson

Casino Unit

Peter Considine
Chaun Jones

BCI

Colleen Anuszewski
Sarah Salerno

Fire Marshalls Office

Kenneth Christensen

Governors Security

Ruth Torres

FBI Task Force

Michael Pendleton

Traffic

John Jacobi
Michael Donorfio

Risk Management

Andrew Matthews

Public Information Office (PIO)

Chris Johnson

Special Services

Kathleen Henry

APPENDIX B
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY FORM 1775-C
MILITARY DEPLOYMENT FORM



State of Connecticut
 Department of Public Safety
Military Deployment Form



Employee Name & Rank	ID #	Unit
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This form will be utilized by all sworn personnel prior to deployment for military assignments which last more than six months.

Please complete the form in its entirety within **one** week after the process begins. Contacts should sign off in space provided.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Meet with military liaison/STOPS program personnel:

- Troop/Unit Military Liaison Supervisor (Name) _____
- STOPS Personnel (Name) _____
- Family Support Services Liaison _____
- STOPS Coordinator _____
- Other (Please List) _____

Meet with Administrative Personnel:

- Human Resources _____
- Fiscal Services _____
- Benefits _____
- Health Insurance _____
- Deferred Compensation _____

Troop/Unit Requirements:

- Turn -In Assigned Cruiser/Vehicle _____
- Purchase Order for any new equipment (Uniforms, leather gear, etc.) _____

Quartermaster:

- Duty Equipment dropped off and stored at quartermaster _____

Union:

- Meet with Union Executives _____

Military Support:

- Director of Veterans Services _____
(860) 655-6177

Meet with Chain of Command:

- Commissioner _____
- Colonel _____
- District Commander _____
- Barracks/ Unit Commander _____
- Barracks/ Unit Executive Officer _____
- First Line Supervisor _____
- STOPS Coordinator _____

Concerns or Questions:

APPENDIX C
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY FORM 1776-C
MILITARY REINTEGRATION FORM



Military Re-Integration Form



Employee Name & Rank	ID #	Unit
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This form will be utilized by all sworn personnel returning from military assignments which lasted more than six months. Please complete the form within 2 weeks after the process begins. Contacts should initial in space provided.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Meet with military liaison/STOPS program personnel:

- Military Liaison (Name) _____
- STOPS Personnel (Name) _____
- Other (Please List/Names) _____

Meet with Administrative Personnel:

- Human Resources _____
- Fiscal Services _____
- Benefits _____
- Health Insurance _____
- Deferred Compensation _____

Troop/Unit Requirements:

- Obtain New Work Schedule _____
- Assigned Cruiser/Vehicle _____
- Duty Equipment Replaced/Picked Up _____
- Purchase Order for any new equipment (Uniforms, leather gear, etc.) _____
- Equipment Inspection/Calibration/Request to Work OT _____

Quartermaster:

- Purchase Order received at Quarter Master if Needed _____

Academy Updates:

- Academy Staff/ In Service Updates _____
- Weapons Qualification Scheduled/Completed _____
- Active Shooter Scheduled/Completed _____
- Training Updates (NIMS, On-Line In Service) _____
- Nexgen Refresher Scheduled _____
- Safety/Survival/Hazwopper Training _____

Union:

- Meet with Union Executives _____

Labor Relations:

- Obtain Updates of Contract Issues/Rules of Conduct _____

VA Representative:

- Benefits _____
- Healthcare (Print Name) _____

Meet with Chain of Command: (Include Date and Time)

- Commissioner _____
- Colonel _____
- District Commander _____
- Barracks/ Unit Commander _____
- Barracks/ Unit Executive Officer _____
- First Line Supervisor _____
- STOPS Coordinator _____