



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
COMMANDANT OF MIDSHIPMEN
ANNAPOLIS MARYLAND 21402-1300

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MDC
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COMMANDANT OF MIDSHIPMEN INSTRUCTION 1520.1

From: Commandant of Midshipmen, U. S. Naval Academy

Subj: U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

1. Purpose. To promulgate policy and implementation instructions for the U.S. Naval Academy Peer Support Program.

2. Background

a. Maintaining psychological health, promoting resilience, and providing resources to optimize the performance of midshipmen are all critically important elements of the USNA mission. A variety of resources are available to enhance the personal and professional development of midshipmen. These include the Midshipmen Development Center (MDC), the Brigade Medical Unit (BMU), the Chaplain Center, and the Center for Academic Excellence. However, many midshipmen are unfamiliar with these resources, unsure how to utilize them, or reluctant to use them out of fear that they might impact commissionability or service assignment.

b. The establishment of "Peer Counselors" or "Peer Advocates" is well established in both military settings and in civilian universities. Peer representatives are important in normalizing help-seeking behavior and in reducing the stigma that is often associated with using helping resources. The availability of knowledgeable, supportive peers allows individuals to explore, in an informal and non-threatening manner, the pros and cons of help-seeking, and learn about the various resources available to them. Informed peers can also provide accessible support and accurate information to those who are struggling with challenges or uninformed about the procedures for seeking help.

3. Policy

a. The USNA's Peer Support Program supports the psychological health and resilience of midshipmen. This program consists of the Brigade Resilience Officer (BRO), along with Peer Advisers, who are appointed at both the Battalion and Company levels. Battalion and Company Peer Advisers will be "Midshipmen in Ranks." These positions will be collateral duties performed by qualified midshipmen who volunteer to serve in this capacity.

b. Company Peer Advisers will serve the following functions:

(1) Provide knowledgeable advice, training, education, and support to their fellow midshipmen.

(2) Assist other midshipmen in determining when to seek help, and educating them on what to expect when they do so.

(3) Serve as an extra set of “eyes and ears” within their companies, helping to identify those who might benefit from additional assistance.

(4) Help their fellow midshipmen make connections with appropriate resources on the Yard.

(5) Serve as advocates for help-seeking within their companies.

c. Battalion Peer Advisers will serve the following functions:

(1) Coordinate the implementation of the Peer Support Program within their Battalions.

(2) Through their Company Peer Advisers, maintain cognizance of issues related to the well-being, resilience, and psychological readiness of midshipmen within their Battalions, and inform the BRO of issues requiring increased attention.

(3) Advocate for help-seeking within their Battalions, encouraging the use of Company Peer Advisers as well as resources on the Yard.

(4) Coordinate outreach events within their Battalions.

d. Company Peer Advisers will be nominated by their Company Commander, and approved by their Company Officer, to serve for the duration of the Academic Year. Battalion Peer Advisers will be similarly nominated by their Battalion Commander, and approved by their Battalion Officer. Nominations will be submitted to the BRO and the Director of MDC, who will have final approval.

e. Each Company will identify at least two Peer Advisers, although additional Peer Advisers will be considered if desired by the Company.

f. All Peer Advisers will provide training, education, and outreach within their Companies, and will market their availability in a manner consistent with the culture and policies of their Company. However, at a minimum Peer Advisers will:

(1) Attend training in May, prior to the Academic Year in which they will serve. This training will include an orientation to the various helping resources on the Yard (MDC, BMU, Chaplains, etc.), a discussion of basic counseling and listening skills, and a review of both the emergency and non-emergency procedures for seeking help.

(2) During the first week of each semester meet with their Company Commander, Company Executive Officer, Platoon Commanders, and Squad Leaders to explain the role of the Peer Adviser, describe the services they provide, and inform leadership about how to access these services.

(3) Meet with their Battalion Chaplain, Battalion DAPA, Company Officer, and Senior Enlisted Leader to plan outreach events and discuss strategies for meeting the needs and goals of their Company leadership.

(4) Disseminate information to their Companies on at least a monthly basis, providing materials related to mental health, performance enhancement, nutrition, or other topics designated by the BRO or MDC.

(5) Coordinate at least one outreach event per semester, focusing on mental health, wellness, resilience, or other relevant topics identified by their Company leadership.

(6) Report monthly to the BRO and the MDC on topics related to the well-being of their Companies. These reports are intended to ensure that the MDC is aware of the various needs within the Brigade, so steps can be taken to address these needs.

(7) Attend regular meetings throughout the semester, as directed by the BRO.

g. The Peer Support Program will fall under the administrative control of the BRO, with the guidance of the MDC Director.

h. Peer Advisers will meet approximately once a month with the BRO and MDC Director to share information. These sessions will enable Peer Advisers to report on the issues they are observing within their Companies, discuss any unmet needs within the Brigade, and receive training and information from MDC that can be shared within their Companies.

4. Responsibility

a. Commandant of Midshipmen

(1) Encourage the use of the Peer Support Program and promote the use of Peer Advisers to ensure that all resilience and mental health needs within the Brigade are met.

(2) Promote policies and communications that destigmatize the use of helping resources on the Yard.

(3) Provide adequate resources for an effective Peer Support Program.

b. Battalion and Company Officers

(1) Ensure that qualified and appropriate midshipmen are nominated to serve as Peer Advisers within their Battalions/Companies.

(2) Contribute to a culture of help-seeking within their respective Battalions and Companies.

(3) Monitor the performance of their Peer Advisers, encourage their use, and ensure they are being appropriately utilized.

c. Director, MDC

(1) Assume overall responsibility for the Peer Support Program, ensuring that Peer Advisers are appropriately selected and trained.

(2) Ensure regular meetings are held between the BRO and the Peer Advisers to elicit feedback, provide support, and disseminate training materials. These meetings should occur approximately once a month.

(3) Provide adequate supervision to ensure that Peer Advisers are following all applicable procedures, and to ensure that they are not acting outside their capabilities or training.

d. Brigade Resilience Officer

(1) Provide day-to-day management and leadership of the Peer Support Program.

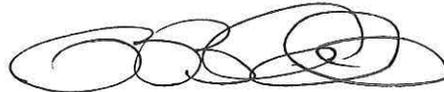
(2) Through the Battalion and Company Peer Advisers, maintain cognizance of issues related to the well-being, resilience, and psychological readiness of the Brigade, and inform the MDC Director and USNA leadership of issues requiring increased attention.

(3) Advocate for help-seeking among the Brigade of Midshipmen, encouraging the use of Peer Advisers as well as helping resources throughout the Yard, including the MDC, the Chaplain Center, the Academic Center, and BMU.

(4) Conduct outreach and initiate programs to enhance resilience within the Brigade. Recommendations for doing so should be made in coordination with other midshipmen leaders (Brigade Religious Programs Officer, SHAPE Commander, SAPR Guide Commander, Alcohol & Drug Education Officer, etc.) and forwarded up the chain of command for consideration.

5. Records Management. Records created as a result of this notice, regardless of media or format, must be managed per Secretary of the Navy Manual 5210.1 of January 2012.

6. Review and Effective Date. The Director, MDC will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of the effective date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, DoD, SECNAV, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction. This instruction will automatically expire five years after the effective date unless reissued or otherwise canceled prior to the five-year anniversary date, or an extension has been granted.



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