

NORTHERN ILLINOIS TRAINING ADVISORY BOARD
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PEER SUPPORT FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Date: March 9-11, 2026 Registration Deadline: February 9, 2026

Time: 0800-1600 hours

Location: Stewart Center West
2900 W Pearl City Road
Freeport, IL

Instructor: Dan and Tammy Roach

Member Fee: \$0 Non-Member & Civilian Fee: \$150

This course has been approved by ILETSB for the following mandates:

Crisis Intervention – 5.5

Legal Updates – 1.0

Officer Wellness/mental health – 9.5

Procedural Justice – 5.0

PURPOSE OF COURSE:

To introduce the student to the fundamentals, principles, and practices of first responder peer support and enable them to provide peer support confidently and effectively to other first responders who are in need of assistance and support.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

Peer Support is a non-clinical process of listening, encouraging, sharing knowledge and skills, and providing assistance to peers in order to help them effectively deal with the challenges of stress and trauma as they experience them through their work and their life.

Peer Supporters are individuals who share common experiences and/or challenges with the people they are helping. Peer Supporters have the desire and enthusiasm to help peers work through the emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual challenges they face as a result of the stress and trauma they have experienced through their jobs and life in general.

This 3-day Peer Support Training class will introduce the student to the process of peer support and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide emotional support and practical guidance to other 1st responders who are in need of assistance.

This course consists of a combination of classroom lectures and practical reality-based training scenarios in which the student will participate in listening exercises as well as mock one-on-one peer support

sessions. The students will apply the knowledge and skills they learn during the classroom portion of the training in scenarios where they will alternately play the role of peer supporter and peer supportee.

COURSE GOALS:

The goals for this course are:

1. To provide the student with a working understanding of the fundamentals, principles, and practices of peer support.
2. To heighten the student's knowledge about the unique environment of stress and trauma that encompasses a first responder's career and to demonstrate the overall health impact this has on the first responder and their family's overall well-being.
3. To describe the normal physiological and behavioral reactions to stress and trauma as well as the accompanying mental and physical health consequences and issues that may arise as a result, such as hypervigilance, PTSD, and suicide.
4. To introduce, reinforce, and highlight various communications skills and techniques that are the necessary tools of first responder peers' supporters.
5. To discuss additional critical incident stress management interventions such as psychological first aid, critical debriefs, chaplain support, professional therapy, etc. that are related to peer support.
6. To introduce the student to the concept of resiliency and to equip them with some knowledge, techniques, and practices that can prepare and fortify them and their peer supportees to proactively address the negative effects of cumulative stress and trauma exposure in their physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual well-being.
7. To discuss some of the available support services that are available for first responders seeking help and assistance.
8. To engage in practical role-playing scenarios and exercises will enhance the student's ability to provide real-world peer support to peers in need.

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

For sworn and civilian first responders and associated mental health and well-being supporters.

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

The instructors will evaluate each student's' comprehension and retention of course based topics based on their participation in discussion and practical exercises conducted during the course. Evaluation forms completed by each student will provide feedback on the quality of the course content and the instructor's effectiveness in delivering this content. These evaluations will also be useful to the instructor in adding improvements to the overall course training. NITAB will provide students with a QR code to evaluate the course and the instructors.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

This course is conducted using the following methods:

- In-class lecture
- In-class general discussion
- In-class case-based discussion
- In-class role playing and active listening exercises

COURSE REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required Readings: All applicable handouts

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADING POLICY:

This is a state certified course; therefore, students can only miss 10% of the class.