

Critical Incident Stress Management

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CISM is a collection of tools, people, resources, and processes brought together to designed to mitigate the impact of trauma events and accelerate the recovery process. Peers are trained in listening skills and ability to recognize, help to prevent, understand the side effects of stress, and ensuring continuum of care through referral to additional long term support systems and resources. Specialized Mental Health Professionals respond with peers following a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident is an event that has an impact sufficient to overwhelm the usual effective coping skills of an individual or group. It is unusually sudden, powerful events that are outside the range of a person's ordinary experience that causes strong reactions and can interfere with a person's ability to work safely or function normally.

Examples of a Critical Incident:

Aviation accident, motor vehicle accident, line of duty death or any incident perceived as either physically or psychologically threatening.

Types of Interventions:

Crisis Management Briefing (CMB)

- Provides information about the incident
- Controls rumors
- Education about symptoms of distress
- Information about basic stress management techniques
- Provide resources available for continued support.
- Goals include providing factual information, instilling a sense of leadership and reducing chaos
- Can be provided virtually or in a large group setting

Defusing is the frontline response to a critical incident

- Best conducted with in one to four hours after the incident to assist individuals who were directly exposed to the event
- It is confidential and voluntary opportunity to learn about stress, share reactions to an incident, and vent emotions.
- A defusing is generally 30-60 minutes long and led by Peer Group Members

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

- A 5-step crisis intervention group process utilized in the normalization of critical incident stress or traumatic stress and integrates crisis intervention strategies with educational techniques.
- Designed to assist homogenous groups of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event.
- The goals are to:
 - Mitigate the impact
 - Accelerate the recovery process
- Conducted 24-72 hours after the event with Peers and a Mental Health Professional

One on Ones:

- Individual intervention provided by a Peer Support Group member
- Used to support, stabilize, and provide stress education
- Not mental health counseling, can be used to determine the need for follow up and referral

Type of Intervention	Goal	Target	Timing	Format
Defusing	Mitigation; information on normal stress reactions	Homogenous group	Within 1-4 hours after the event, if possible	Introduction Exploration Information
Crisis Management Briefing	Mitigation; info push; rumor reduction	Individuals directly or indirectly involved	Anytime	Information Reactions Coping strategies & resources
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing	Inform & consult; stress management	Homogenous group	24-72 hours after the event	Introduction Facts Thoughts Reactions Symptoms Teaching Re-entry/Referral
One on One	Mitigation	Anyone	24-72 hours after the event, if possible	Stabilization Acknowledgement Facilitation Encouragement Restoration & Referral

Standard of Care:

We are committed to crisis intervention practices that adhere to the Standard of Care established by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF), in providing stabilization of personnel and preventing further harm.

A licensed Mental Health Professional is required to assist Critical Incident Peer Support Groups. Peer Supporters are not trained, nor are they qualified to operate independently; doing so is a violation of established Boundaries of Competence and compromise the integrity of the program.

The Federal agencies acknowledge and utilize the ICISF as the accepted industry standard for training and certification of CISM personnel. Federal CISM qualification standards can be found in the [Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement to NWCG PMS 310-1](#)

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities:

- Identification of the event as a critical incident
- Request Peer Support (CISM)
 - Reach out to the Geographic Area CISM Coordinator
 - Provide a general overview of the situation & determine appropriate response
- Manage information about the critical incident
 - Acknowledge that an incident has occurred, a CMB is a great way to accomplish this for all employees
 - Address any rumors that may be circulating or concerns that employees may voice
 - Share information about what employees can expect
 - Provide information on reactions to crisis and trauma and provide stress mitigation tools

- When the CIPS arrives
 - Make time to provide an in-briefing to the group and the mental health professional
 - Provide the CISM Lead with contact information of leaders of groups affected
 - Determine any outstanding logistical support needed
 - Locations of briefings, private space for meetings etc.
 - EAP Provider information or any local resources that may be available.
- When the CIPS leaves, continue to follow up with employees

Benefits of CISM

- CISM services are crisis intervention techniques; they are not mental health therapy
- Participants may reduce their stress levels and experience less stress symptoms.
- CISM helps to minimize mental and emotional repercussions
- Factual information about the event, given by CIPS helps fill in knowledge gaps and provides additional perspective on the incident.
- CISM bridges the gap to additional resources and mental health services.