



Virginia Department of State Police

General Order OPR 7.00

Critical Incident Stress Management Program

Purpose: To establish procedures and guidelines for activating the Critical Incident Stress Management Program.

1. The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program has been established to minimize the effects of critical incidents and to help employees cope with reactions to these incidents. In addition, the CISM Program will be available for outside law enforcement agencies, upon request.
2. Definitions
 - a. Critical Incident – any incident, action, or event which may cause significant emotional reaction in employees. A critical incident may include, but is not limited to:
 - (1) line of duty death;
 - (2) serious line of duty injury or assault;
 - (3) suicide;
 - (4) officer involved shootings;
 - (5) mass-casualty incidents and natural or man-made disasters;
 - (6) serious motor vehicle crashes;
 - (7) extended undercover operations;
 - (8) significant event involving children or the elderly;
 - (9) incident involving known victim; and
 - (10) personal or family tragedies; e.g., violent criminal incidents involving themselves or their families, or deaths in family, etc.

- b. Critical Incident Stress Management – programs and strategies designed to mitigate the effects of critical incidents in emergency personnel (i.e., employees on the scene, dispatchers, etc.) and to assist them in managing and recovering from significant stress should they encounter it in their work. The main strategies are:
- (1) Debriefing – a group meeting or discussion, (usually held 24 to 72 hours after an incident, employing both crisis intervention and educational processes. The meeting is targeted toward mitigating psychological distress associated with a critical incident or traumatic event.
 - (2) Defusing – a small group process which is instituted after any traumatic event powerful enough to overwhelm the coping mechanisms of the personnel exposed to it.
 - (3) Demobilization – a brief intervention immediately after a disaster or major incident which provides a transition period from the major incident back to the normal work routine.
 - (4) Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) – a training and counseling seminar for employees who have previously been involved in a critical incident.
 - (5) On-Scene Support Services – support services provided at the scene of a critical or traumatic event or incident.
 - (6) Crisis Management Briefing – a briefing conducted in an open forum where there is little or no control over who is in attendance. An overview of the event is provided, followed by instruction on stress and positive coping methods. An opportunity for those in attendance to ask questions may be offered, but discussion is not facilitated or encouraged by CISM team members. The facts of the incident should be provided by a public information officer or other ranking employee who is authorized to speak publicly for the affected agency about the incident.
 - (7) Special Event Support – In the case of a line of duty death or other tragedy, members may be asked to provide CISM service to those attending a funeral, viewing, memorial, or other service. This service may be shortly after the death or many years later, depending upon the request presented to the CISM coordinator.

- c. Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM) – a statewide network of volunteers comprised of sworn employees and civilian employees specially trained in CISM methodology to provide support and assistance to first responders and others affected by critical incidents.
- d. CISM Coordinator – a position appointed by the Superintendent whose responsibilities include appointment, removal and deployment of CISM team members. In addition, he/she shall establish minimum training guidelines, schedule required training/meetings and maintain CISM team records and documentation.
- e. CISM Team Leader – a CISM team member designated to assist with the coordination of CISM training and operational activities of his/her regional CISM team.
- f. CISM Assistant Team Leader – a CISM team member designated to assist the CISM team leader with his/her duties and responsibilities. He/She shall be responsible for maintaining a current recall roster of all team members, and for notifying the CISM coordinator of any changes to the roster. The assistant team leader will assume responsibility for the duties of team leader in the absence of the team leader.

3. Responsibilities

- a. All information shared during debriefing, defusing, demobilization, and individual consultations conducted by the CISM members is confidential, except information which involves danger to the employee or others and matters of a criminal nature. This information will be handled as would any sensitive information of an active investigation.
- b. The CISM coordinator is responsible for coordinating crisis intervention after critical incidents and will ensure the sharing of any information will not jeopardize any active criminal or internal investigation.
- c. The mental health professional provides advice and backup to CISM members and may take control of the debriefing or other CISM service for which he/she is present, if he/she deems it appropriate to do so. The mental health professional also provides brief consultation to individuals who have been identified as needing additional support services and may, at his/her discretion, offer additional counseling, consultation, or referral.

- d. Supervision and management will:
 - (1) ensure personnel attend the session for all mandatory activations;
 - (2) assure personnel that no one has to speak if they choose not to;
 - (3) inform personnel no notes are taken and the information is strictly confidential;
 - (4) schedule the session for a time and location not interfering or impeding the criminal or internal investigation;
 - (5) coordinate the session with the appropriate division and the CISM coordinator;
 - (6) ensure that physical and logistical requirements have been finalized; and
 - (7) make CISM team members aware of all information related to the incident, including but not limited to:
 - (a) pictures,
 - (b) diagrams,
 - (c) incident reports,
 - (d) audio/video tapes, and
 - (e) newspaper articles.

4. CISM Activation

- a. Mandatory CISM activation is required for:
 - (1) line of duty death or other unnatural death of an employee;
 - (2) investigation or response to the death or serious injury of a sworn employee;
 - (3) officer involved shootings;
 - (4) any mass-casualty incidents to which employees respond; and
 - (5) the violent death of a family member of an employee.
- b. Employees involved in a critical incident will be required to participate in the CISM Program when activation is mandatory. All other participation is

voluntary; and any employee who becomes aware of a critical incident is encouraged to notify a supervisor and/or a CISM team member.

- c. Mandatory activation refers to a debriefing. Any other CISM services may be offered or requested, but unless the CISM coordinator or his/her designee determines that a debriefing is not appropriate to the unique circumstances of the incident, the requirement of mandatory activation and participation has not been met until a debriefing has been conducted. In any instance where there are questions or there is disagreement concerning compliance with the mandatory activation policy, the CISM coordinator will be consulted by the affected Division Commander or Commanders and the CISM coordinator will make the final determination on whether the incident or services provided following the incident meet the criteria for activation of the CISM team.
- d. A supervisor, upon learning that an employee has been involved in a critical incident, will immediately notify his/her Division Commander through channels and the CISM team coordinator. The CISM coordinator shall consult with the division commander to assess the need for:
 - (1) on-scene support services;
 - (2) demobilization;
 - (3) defusing;
 - (4) debriefing; and
 - (5) individual consultation.
- e. If the CISM coordinator or his/her designee determines that the use of the Critical Incident Stress Management team is mandatory or appropriate, he/she shall activate the CISM team.
- f. Requests for CISM activations will be directed to the CISM team coordinator who will notify appropriate command staff of the activation.
- g. The CISM coordinator will notify the CISM team leader, who shall assist with deployment of team personnel. Information on the nature of the incident, the personnel involved, the time and location of the incident, and the current status of the incident will be provided to the CISM coordinator. The CISM coordinator may request additional CISM team members as needed.

- h. If any supervisor becomes aware of a critical incident affecting another law enforcement agency, he/she will notify the CISM coordinator after consulting with his/her Division Commander to determine if it is appropriate to offer critical incident stress management. Mental health professionals, chaplains, and peer support advisors should be assigned according to the need identified by the CISM team coordinator.
- 5. CISM services will be confidential. With the exception of information which involves danger to the employee or others and matters of a criminal nature, the only information released will pertain to the notification of the employee's supervisor by the CISM team coordinator regarding the employee's required participation in the CISM program. (This is not a fitness for duty issue.)
- 6. On-Scene Support
 - a. The deployed CISM team members(s) will respond to the critical incident scene as directed by the CISM team leader. Depending on the dynamics of the incident, there may be multiple scenes, to include that of the incident, the hospital, the communications center, and any number of other areas where affected employees may be located following an incident.
 - b. CISM team members will inform on-scene supervisors of their arrival.
 - (1) Responding team members' first responsibility is to provide support for the affected employee, but if time and resources allow, the team members may provide support to the supervisors of the affected employees, to include contacting, notifying, and/or transporting family members, significant others, or members of the affected employee's support network.
 - (2) For major incidents, every effort will be made to provide multiple team members for each identified scene so that support of supervisors, as described above, can be accomplished.
 - c. Contact will be made with the affected employee(s) to:
 - (1) assess the employee's emotional need;
 - (2) support self-esteem and self-reliance;
 - (3) offer team services, as appropriate; and
 - (4) activate the affected employee's social support network.

7. Defusing/Demobilization/Debriefing
 - a. The deployed CISM team member(s) will respond to a predetermined location for the prescribed event at the direction of the CISM team leader.
 - b. Support of a mental health volunteer is encouraged for each of these types of service, but is required for the debriefing.
 - c. Whenever possible, a debriefing should be held at a location other than Department property, where privacy and confidentiality can be assured.
 - d. No recordings or notes may be taken.
8. When deemed appropriate by the CISM coordinator, CISM services may be provided to the families, relatives and significant others of the affected employee(s).
9. Follow-up Services
 - a. The CISM team will remain available to the employee and/or family members for follow-up services during the readjustment period.
 - b. Follow-up services will be provided to ensure all personnel who need or want additional support are given support from the team.
 - c. Follow-up services will be provided to participants of the defusing/demobilization/debriefing immediately after the initial session is complete. Follow-up services include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) division or work location visit;
 - (2) telephone call;
 - (3) chaplain visit;
 - (4) individual consultation;
 - (5) referral for therapy;
 - (6) additional meeting with group; and/or
 - (7) family session.

- d. Follow-up service may be initiated by:
 - (1) a participant through a telephone call or personal appearance;
 - (2) a supervisor's request that a team member check on a participant;
 - (3) a team member;
 - (4) a Division Commander; or
 - (5) the CISM coordinator for the purpose of quality assurance.
- e. A team member will maintain continued contact with the CISM team leader or assistant team leader.