

Critical Incident Stress Management



What is a critical incident?

A critical or traumatic incident is an event that is sudden, random and unexpected and is outside of the usual range of daily experiences. As such, it may overwhelm one's ability to cope and affect one's sense of security. This, in turn, may cause a feeling of discomfort, powerlessness and helplessness. A critical incident may involve a natural disaster (flood, earthquake, fire) sudden death, fatal accident, any act of violence (destruction of property, robbery, physical assault, bomb threats) or any other event that may have a powerful impact on the workplace.

What are CISM services?

Critical Incident Stress Management is a group meeting organized for employees affected by the critical or traumatic event. This debriefing is educational in nature. The main purpose is to reduce the probability that employees experience long-term emotional and/or psychological consequences. The debriefing also offers support, normalizes commonly experienced reactions and provides skills to cope and manage the physical, behavioral or psychological reactions related to the traumatic event. The debriefing is not designed to interrupt responses to trauma; it is designed to normalize trauma responses.

Debriefings can be conducted as group or individual sessions. The individual session may last up to 45 minutes, while the group session may last up to two hours. If a group session is scheduled, the group should have no more than 12 participants, as smaller groups allow for increased participation. If the event affects a large number of employees, additional meetings may be scheduled. The CISM services are typically scheduled within 24 to 72 hours after the event, when reactions have emerged.

How do I arrange for CISM services?

Call your GuidanceResources® program to access services. The toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A CISM Coordinator will assist you and determine the best course of action to take during the crisis. They will assess the needs of those involved and help you determine a plan of action. When appropriate, a trained professional (counselor) will visit the worksite to provide debriefing services for the staff.

How much do CISM services cost?

All phone consultations with CISM Coordinators are provided at no cost. Additional charges may apply for on-site services; please consult your Account Manager.

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