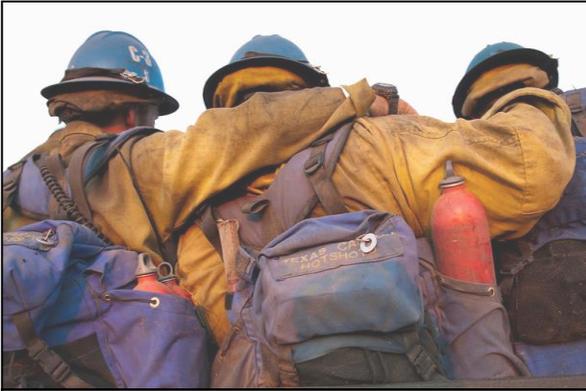


Wildland Fire Critical Incident Stress Management Program.

Peer Supporter Roles and Description



Who is a Peer Supporter?

A peer is an individual with a professional history, often having historic recognition for background and experience within the “culture” of the wildland fire community who has a willingness to assist others in times of crisis. Peers come from all different aspects of the wildland fire community and also include individuals from other disciplines within our agencies.

The best peers are individuals who share the same backgrounds; i.e., engine personnel to engine personnel. A peer to a firefighter on a hotshot or veterans crew for example, would have substantial (and preferably current) experience on the fireline and within the hotshot/veterans crew community.

Peer supporters are members of a Critical Incident Peer Support Group (CIPS) and are a highly respected and trusted person from any of the different organizations or specific functions within the national fire program. A Peer Support Group member is who has volunteered to take the required International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) training, has applied to the program, been screened and selected for their role. Peer supporters are trained to “listen and refer” and to provide crisis interventions services in coordination with a Mental Health Professional.

Critical Incident Peer Support

Peer relationships are built around a mutual understanding, respect and trust. Shared experiences, particularly those which have happened during wildland fire operations, bind individuals together. They are the foundation for peer support as they foster the initial trust and credibility necessary for developing relationships in which individuals are willing to open up and discuss their problems despite concerns about stigma. Peer-to-peer programs facilitate opportunities for individuals to talk with trained peer supporters who can offer educational and social support and provided avenues for additional help if needed.

Experts believe that various techniques and processes used in Critical Incident Peer Support can help individuals improve their coping abilities and dramatically decrease the occurrence of Post - Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), lower the tension and mitigate the group’s reaction to a traumatic event. Wildland fire and aviation personnel suffering from such symptoms have shown to benefit significantly from Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

Training and Experience Requirements

- Successful completion of the [International Critical Incident Stress Foundation's](#) Assisting Individuals in Crisis Course.
- Successful completion of the [International Critical Incident Stress Foundation's](#) Assisting Groups in Crisis Course.

There are no “trainee” assignments per se for Peer Supporters. The CIPS Group Leader will take your experience level into account when making assignments and work with you to ensure you are successful in your position.

After no more than two years, peer support personnel are encouraged to attend the ICISF Advanced Training Course which includes a Peer Support Group Leader Module to enhance their effectiveness. Other ICISF courses are also available and required depending upon your position in the CISM program.

Continuing training is necessary to enhance problem-solving skills, provide a venue for group sharing, and allow for an exchange of experiences among program participants. Most initial training sessions last a minimum of three days to one week.

Peer Supporter Roles

- Assist the CIPS Group Leader and Clinician in providing Crisis Management Briefings, Defusing's, Debriefings, One -on-One Support and information sharing as directed.
- Assist the CIPS Group Leader and Clinician in setting up and organizing formal meetings (location, seating, refreshments, assembling resource information and literature to be available at debriefings, etc.).
- Be self-sufficient (Travel Card or Credit Card).
- For peers of fireline personnel, you are required to have all of your required PPE to meet with affected personnel on the fireline, in spike camps and other remote locations.
- Prior to the arrival of the CIPS Group Leader you may be called on to initiate contact with local managers and staff to explain the peer support program, gather information and coordinate logistics.
- Prior to the arrival of the CIPS Group Leader you may be called to meet informally with those affected or involved with the critical incident. You will be asked to estimate the number of persons involved, make a personal assessment to the CIPS Group Leader of the impacts on the local unit (and other units involved or affected) and prepare (answer process questions) that may be asked.

Peer Selection Criteria

- Able to deal with ambiguous situations.
- Area of expertise is Wildland Fire and Aviation and other disciplines.
- Red Card Qualifications.
- Ability to lead during adverse, chaotic and crisis situations.
- Possess and routinely applies analytical skills.
- Communicates in concise but caring manner.
- Decisive.
- Firm but flexible.
- Learns quickly and easily.
- Reputation as a "good listener."
- Observant of behavior and processes.
- Persuasive without being overbearing.
- Sensitive to nuances of situations of people.
- Consistently manages stress effectively.
- Able to identify teaching moments.
- Experience negotiating successfully.
- Able to recover quickly from change, misfortune, difficult times "buoyant."



Code of Ethics

Certified Peer Supporters will maintain high standards of personal conduct. Individual Peer Supporters must excuse themselves or the Critical Incident Stress Management Coordinator shall not designate or assign any peer supporter if the following conditions exist.

The Peer Supporter has:

- Played a significant role in the event.
- Has direct command or supervisory authority over any employee involved in the event.
- Close friends affected by the incident.
- Works with the affected group on a regular basis.
- The potential to become involved as any part of any internal investigative body.
- A close relative of any affected employee.

Peer Supporters will:

- At all times respect the rights and dignity of their Peer Support Group members and those they serve.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of those they serve.
- Not enter into dual relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests they serve or with either the position they are currently filling or their position with their agency of record.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the foundation on which the CISM program rests. CISM principles require that confidentiality and privacy of responders be respected. Confidentiality applies to information received during a debriefing or individual session.

Program members have a primary obligation and take responsible precautions to respect the confidentiality rights of those with whom they work. The agencies will not question the individual(s) involved, or CISM team members regarding the facts surrounding a critical incident response and intervention or the individual(s) involved, or referrals made to a mental health provider.

All CISM/CIPS personnel are required to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality and integrity. Those impacted by a traumatic/critical incident may find it difficult to open up and express themselves to those they do not trust, respect, or find credibility with.

All CISM program members must work to maintain themselves worthy of trust, both on assignment and in their professional day to day jobs. Peers who are trustworthy, and demonstrate integrity and respect in what they do are the key element to assisting individuals in crisis. [See Ethics and Conduct Policy](#)