



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Washington, DC 20240

July 13, 2021

Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors
Attention: All Regional Fire Management Officers
All Regional and Local Unit Fire Management Officers
Branch of Wildland Fire Management

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Subject: Critical Incident Stress Management Program

Purpose: The purpose of this Instruction Memorandum (IM) is to establish a standard of care for peer support, training, and certification. This IM also formally adopts qualification requirements for peer supporters in the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program, clarifies CISM requesting processes for fire and non-fire incidents, and communicates access to CISM websites and content. This IM intends to serve as interim guidance until a national policy is approved and released.

Background: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Branch of Wildland Fire Management is committed to crisis intervention practices, adhering to the Standard of Care established by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) to provide stabilization of personnel and prevent further harm. A licensed Mental Health Professional (MHP) is required to assist Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Groups. Peer Supporters are not trained, nor are they qualified to operate independently; doing so is a violation of the established Boundaries of Competence and compromises the program's integrity.

Additionally, the BIA Branch of Wildland Fire Management acknowledges and utilizes the ICISF as the accepted industry standard for BIA CISM program personnel training and certification. These approved ICISF courses are available for BIA personnel.

Class participants receive training to identify with their peers who has experienced a critical incident. The courses provide training in positive coping strategies for stress and help others validate their thoughts and emotions surrounding a critical incident.

1. CISM Basic Course (Required for Peer Support Group Members)
 - The CISM Basic training includes two courses (1) Assisting Individuals in Crisis and (2) Group Crisis Intervention.
2. CISM Advanced Course (Required for Peer Support Group Leader)
 - The CISM Advanced training includes two courses (1) Advanced Assisting Individuals in Crisis and (2) Advanced Group Crisis Intervention.

Policy: CISM Qualifications: All BIA Personnel participating in a CISM response shall be qualified as a Critical Incident Stress Peer Support Group Member (CISM) or as a Critical Incident Stress Peer Support Group Leader (CISL). Position qualifications are adopted from the DOI Incident Positions Qualifications Guide (IPQG) and were added to the Federal Wildland Qualification Supplement on January 1, 2021.

Special consideration shall be given when recommending or approving either CISM or CISL. A recommendation by the employee's Fire Management Officer is required. This recommendation will go to the BIA National CISM Coordinator for approval.

CISM Request Processes: The Branch of Wildland Fire Management CISM Program is intended for employees who work in the fire and aviation program with work-related needs but may assist other employees as needed and requested. *Crisis intervention is based on recognition of need, not strictly the occurrence of an event.* What is appropriate will depend on the nature, severity, and duration of the event; the number, skills, and cohesiveness of those involved; and the severity of their physical and emotional symptoms. The CISM Program does not replace professional counseling and other services available to employees through the Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), but it does help align these resources as an appropriate next step when applicable.

1) Fire Request

The BIA does not maintain standing "CISM Teams" on an on-call rotation. An Agency Administrator or designee places all CISM requests for BIA-related incidents, regardless of Geographic Area, through the BIA National CISM Coordinator. A CIPS group will be assembled at the time of request and will be composed of members who align with the backgrounds and experience of those involved in the critical incident. The National CISM Coordinator will coordinate requests through Interagency Resources Ordering Capability (IROC) with the respective Geographic Area Coordination Center.

2) Non-Fire Request

BIA requests for CISM support for non-fire incidents must be authorized by the Director, BIA Aviation and Safety. The BIA's National CISM Coordinator shall work directly with the unit affected to determine the most appropriate response and ensure the appropriate response is coordinated with necessary resources. Use of the coordination system is not required for non-fire events.

For information on the CISM program, please see the National Interagency Wildland Fire Critical Incident Management website at: <https://gacc.nifc.gov/cism/index.html>.

The above qualifications of CISM and CISL were required beginning January 1, 2021. If there are additional questions, please contact Nelda St. Clair, BIA Critical Incident Stress Program Manager, (775) 230-4351 or at nelda.stclair@bia.gov.