Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader Roles

Supporting Managers and Leaders

Most often, managers or Agency Administrators who request Peer Support have no experience in the process, what the professional outcome will look like and their roles in the process itself.

Because they are concerned about their employees, they may have very powerful opinions in what they want done, when they want it done, how they want it done, and perhaps unrealistic expectations of the final product. While these desires are most often very sincerely intended to support their employees, they may be based on the belief that "ordering CISM" is an immediate need response and that Peer Support Groups operate like Incident Management Teams.

The Peer Support Group Leader must have the rights skill set to address political issues, lack of understanding of the CISM, and other influences that occur after an organization has experienced a critical incident and provide education about the process and what to expect.

 The Peer Support Group Leader must be able to recognize these situations and be persuasive without being overbearing or disrespectful of the situation.

Training and Experience Requirements

Training

- Successful completion of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) Assisting Individuals in Crisis Course.
- Successful completion of the ICISF Assisting Groups in Crisis Course.
- Successful completion of the ICISF Advanced Critical Incident Stress Management Course
- Successful completion of the Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader Course
- Successful completion of ICISF Strategic Response to Crisis
- Successful completion of ICISF Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention.

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.

Experience:

- Numerous assignments as a Peer Supporter with varying complexities.

- Preferably assignments involving Serious Accident Investigations (SAI, FLA, CRP)

Selection:
- Has applied to their respective CISM program, been screened and selected by the CISM Coordinator and or CISM Committee and agrees to adhere to the Bureau of Land Management Confidentiality and Code of Ethics Guidelines.
- Submits ICISF certificates of training.
- Submits Letter of supervisor's approval.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Oversees the implementation of the elements of the established program. These are defined in scope as what is appropriate along with the laws of ethical behavior, while staying within the limits of their training and experiences and scope of practice.
- Required to keep confidences, be committed to the program while adhering to established limits and protocols.
- Stay aware of their boundaries and seeking guidance and assistance when appropriate.
- As leaders, they are held to a high standard and must demonstrate respect and integrity for what crisis intervention is and what it is not.
- A CIPS Group Leader has participated in numerous assignments as a Peer Supporter and has had enough exposure to various incidents and contacts they are able bring "order to chaos" found after a critical incident.
- A Peer Support Group Leader is expected to navigate the "sea of good intentions," without drowning.
- Function as the liaison between the local unit and the peer support group.
- Provide the team members with reporting times, lodging and meeting locations.
- Coordinate with MHP's in determining the appropriate crisis intervention tactics to be applied with specific individuals and groups.
- Briefing the MHP as to what our expectations are for the meetings and travel.
- Allocate peer supporters based on background and culture.
- Coordinate with the group(s) daily when the groups are in multiple locations.
- Incident Business Management duties such as approving time, monitoring work/rest, and driving hours.
- Keep the coordinator informed as to the status of the assignment via daily call (s).
- Demobilization of resources and providing travel information Coordinator/Point of Contact, and dispatch center.
- Provide the CISM Coordinator with a post incident report using the standard format.

Care for the Caregivers

Just as it is the responsibility of the CIPS Group to meet the needs those they serve in the field, it is also the responsibility of the Peer Support Group itself to take care of its own members after a response.

Peer Supporters are not immune to the effects of direct contact with highly stressful events or from dealing with people who have raw human emotions. The Peer Support Group Leader must be aware of the potential impact that their roles as peer supporters and group leaders can have on them personally. Peer Support Group members should practice the same techniques that they teach with regard to handling stress.

It is extremely important for Peer Support Groups to close-out with one and other prior to demobilization. At a minimum the following should be accomplished: review of mobilization and intervention response, attempt to understand what took place, develop and provide the coordinator with recommendations and follow-up items, and do a self-check prior to being released.

Coordination with Investigations

It is important to carefully coordinate directly with a variety of investigation teams assigned after a critical incident or line of duty death. The CIPS Group reports to the Agency Administrator and is a separate entity from any investigation process.

The CIPS Group Leader and the Serious Accident Investigation Team Leader will coordinate sequencing for interviews but remain completely separate.

If Critical Incident Peer Support Services are requested for the investigation team, another CIPS Group will be mobilized so that there is no potential for conflict of interest or confidentiality issues

Post Incident Reporting

The CIPS Group Leader is to collect only statistical information on the intervention, its location, and/or recommendations. The CIPS Group Leader shall submit a post-deployment summary report to the CISM Coordinator as soon as possible after each response. This final report shall include an overview of the response, after action review items, and recommendations for improvement. These reports will not contain any personal or confidential information and will be used only for the purpose of program administration, evaluation and oversight.