



Bureau of Land Management – Critical Incident Stress Management Program

Mental Health Professionals

Who We Are

We are members of the [Critical Incident Stress Management \(CISM\)](#) program established by the [Bureau of Land Management](#) (BLM) to provide support to Fire and Aviation personnel as well as other employees of our organization when serious accidents, injuries or death have occurred, most often in the line of duty.

Since its inception in 2001, fire related personnel (including dispatchers, engines, smokejumpers, hotshots, aviation, fire managers, and others) have attended the [International Critical Incident Stress Foundation \(ICISF\)](#) classes. They have responded to a variety of fire and aviation line of duty, and off duty, traumatic incidents providing valuable support. The BLM CISM Program is committed to peers helping peers through the ICISF CISM model which has been officially adopted at the BLM's Standard of Care.

International Critical Incident Stress Foundation

[Critical Incident Peer Support Groups](#) (CIPS) use the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) model for their formally established training and crisis intervention standard of care. CIPS personnel are trained to work with clinicians in the delivery of Crisis Management Briefings (CMB), Defusing's, Debriefings, one-on-one support and/or variations of these crisis intervention techniques. All CIPS personnel are trained and certified by the ICISF in Group Crisis Intervention and Assisting Individuals in Crisis. CIPS Group Leaders are highly skilled, experienced and trained through ICISF in:

- Basic and Advanced Critical Incident Stress Management
- Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader
- Strategic Response to Crisis
- Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

Our Meeting Format

Prior to any crisis intervention, the CIPS Group Leader and clinicians will meet and agree to the appropriate ICISF intervention techniques, format and the roles each will perform during the process.

It is the responsibility of the Peer Supporters, through their presentations, to help the affected personnel get comfortable with the Mental Health Professional (MHP) and their role in the process.

The role of the MHP is to provide affected individuals any information the MHP feels appropriate during and after the peer supporter's presentations. CIPS group MHP's are also there to address any issues which are outside of the Peer Supporters training and established boundary of competence. The MHP's are free to apply their expertise, as they deem necessary.

When there is a need for the MHP's role to expand (Defusings/Debriefings) the peer supporters' role will change to one of support as the MHP directs the intervention toward the information they feel is essential. When the MHP is finished presenting, the meeting will be closed out by the CIPS Group Lead. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) requires an MHP for Defusings and Debriefings.

Due to the ad hoc nature and extremely vast, very rural, areas protected by the wildland fire community the assigned MHP should factor in the limited availability of any follow up care (EAP) that is offered.



The “Module” Concept

The [wildland fire culture](#) is centered around various types of firefighting resources. The most common resources affected by a critical incident include [engine crews](#) (3-7 individuals), [hand crews](#) and [hotshot crews](#) (20 individuals), [helitack crews](#), [smokejumpers](#) and other [aviation](#) resources, and dispatchers. It will often include various local management personnel (overhead). These individual firefighting resources are often referred to as “crews” or “modules.” Wildland fire crews or modules can be very close knit groups of people who live and work together for long periods of time. They are assigned to fires nationally as well as internationally and work in very remote areas under hazardous conditions.

Given this culture, these individuals will usually only be receptive to meeting CIPS Groups with their entire crew or module present. As such it is essential for the CIPS Group’s peer supporters to integrate the MHP into the module’s trust so they get the most benefit in a group setting. The CIPS Groups are part of the culture so they view the members of the module or crew itself as a primary part of each other’s natural coping and support system along with family and outside of work sources.

Since these modules are used throughout the country every effort is usually made to return them to their “home unit” prior to meeting with a CIPS Group. However, several CIPS groups may be assigned at one time to respond to the unit the incident occurred on as well as the unit the module is from. A MHP traveling with a CIPS Group can expect to meet with affected individuals who are away from their homes and natural support system. They will only receive follow-up care if they seek it out once they arrive back at their home unit.

The Meeting Process

The facilitator of the crew or module meeting is usually the CIPS Group Leader but may also be CIPS Group member. Module meetings are usually a combination of a Crisis Management Briefing and a Debriefing depending on which intervention the MHP feels is warranted. The meetings are often started in a circle to facilitate a more seamless transition to a Debriefing.

The CMB segment of the meeting follows the standard format which allows for the peer supporters to begin to “break the ice” with the personnel involved. In most cases the Lead Peer Supporter will facilitate a review of the “Reactions to Crisis and Trauma” handout with each of the peer supporters covering predetermined topics. The peer supporters will also use their presentations to integrate the MHP with the group during their discussions. The MHP generally covers the Reactions Phase.

When the peer supporters finish their sections, the CIPS Group Leader will ask the MHP if they would like to add anything. The CIPS Group MHP is encouraged to speak during the CMB about whatever topics they feel are appropriate at the time. The MHP can also use this opportunity to break out and start the Debriefing process if they feel the situation warrants. During a debriefing the MHP should facilitate and the peer supporters will follow the lead of the MHP. When the MHP has finished the debriefing process the CIPS Group Leader will wrap up the meeting.

Logistics

Whenever possible, CIPS groups try to arrange to hold the interventions “off-site” and a way from government facilities. We often utilize a hotel conference room so that we have an area that is quiet, private and free of interruptions from office paging systems, other employees etc.

We have also found it helpful to arrange for food and beverages. When possible we will start a meeting around 1100 and after an hour or so break for lunch. By sharing lunch together we have an opportunity for one on one conversation in a less structured format. Further, providing lunch, fruit, juice, coffee tea etc. may offer a form of “comfort” and draw people in.

Note: When meeting with specific groups such as hotshots, helitack, smokejumpers, engines, etc. at their home unit, our interventions will often take place at their station or base. These are locations where they feel most at home.

We will also offer to meet with lesser affected personnel in the field (on fires) and will, when warranted, make ourselves available to travel to fire camps, spike camps, air tanker bases, dispatch centers and other support centers. (See appropriate clinician dress and attire on the last page).



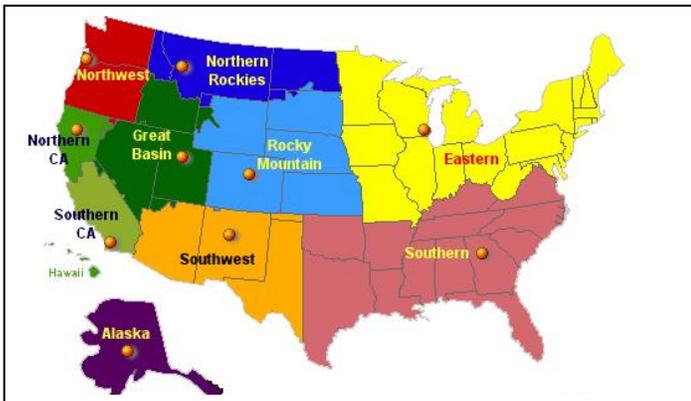
Debriefing

The CIPS Group members are trained to support the clinician during the Debriefings. It should be noted that the term “Debriefing” has become a misused, overused and misunderstood generic term within the wildland fire community for CISM and CIPS related activities. Most requests received are for a “Debriefing” and many people refer to every process as a “Debriefing” including Crisis Management Briefings. The CIPS Group Leader will defer to the MHP when determining which processes is warranted. Should a Debriefing be done the MHP should have the lead role and peer supporters should operate in a support role. BLM requires a MHP for the Debriefing process.

Dress and Attire

Dress for assignments is casual. The personnel you will be meeting with often spend days away from home and without showers while they are on the fireline. Your attire should be relaxed with no dress pants, skirts, dress shirts, business suits, coats/jackets or ties. Jeans, tab front or button shirts and casual shoes, tennis shoes or hiking boots are welcome. Many of our assignments are in very scenic locations at higher elevations.

A wise Clinician always has a sweater, sweatshirts or coat even in August....



For More Information Visit:

[Wildland Firefighters: Everyone Goes Home](#)

[BLM Critical Incident Stress Management Program](#)

Travel Requirements

The wildland fire community, while surprisingly small in numbers, covers extremely vast and varied geographic areas. The nation has ten wildland fire “geographic areas” with Coordination Centers located in Atlanta, Milwaukee, Denver, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, Missoula, Ontario and Redding California, as well as Portland, Oregon and Fairbanks, Alaska. The National Coordination Center is located in Boise, Idaho. Orders for Peer Support Groups are requested through these coordination centers based on the geographic area where the incident occurred.

MHPs assigned to CIPS Groups may be required to travel to many locations, quite often in remote areas, which are hours apart to meet with affected personnel. These individuals or modules/crews may still be in the area where the critical incident occurred and not at home. If another CIPS Group has not been assigned at the home unit, we may be required to travel to that location and provide support there as well. Numerous groups in a vast variety of locations may need our support so we “triage” or prioritize which locations we will intervene first.

The CIPS Groups are adaptable to the needs of the affected personnel and travel is required to meet these needs. A great deal of flexibility will be required of the entire group when we are on the road. Many of our meeting locations are in warehouses, barracks and fire camps. Relocating in the evening so we are on-site for the next day’s meetings is common. Our remote locations generally offer sporadic, limited though unique, dining and lodging opportunities.

We generally travel by car (agency or rental) as commercial air service is usually only available to major hubs often not near our incident locations. If you are asked to rent a vehicle and long distance solo travel across remote country isn’t something you are comfortable with, let the CIPS Group Lead know. A group member will be assigned to accompany you.

