

SUPPLEMENT 1

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

Personnel may experience a critical incident and traumatic stress during the line of duty. A critical incident is any unexpected, traumatic event that affects an individual's feelings of personal safety, their ability to perform daily activities and their ability to concentrate on their normal job duties. Simply put, a critical incident is a traumatic event (or perceived life-threatening event) that has sufficient power to overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. Critical incidents may also occur outside of work and still impact large numbers of employees. A critical incident is not defined by the event itself, but by the reaction that an organization, employee, community, or family has to the event.

CRITICAL INCIDENT PEER SUPPORT (CIPS)

Peer relationships are built around a mutual understanding, respect and trust. Shared experiences 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.

CIPS has proven benefits. Early intervention, using both professional and specially trained peer support personnel, has been shown to promote positive recovery from traumatic stress. This "support group" intervention model includes a Mental Health Care Clinician Professional (MHP) often referred to as a "Clinician" who specializes in trauma along with the trained peers, were first developed for use with military combat veterans.

Over time, this model which is referred to as the "International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) model, has found its way into civilian first responders (police, fire, ambulance, emergency workers and disaster rescuers). It is accepted as the most effective standard of care for organizations with cultures having a history of mistrust in outside sources for crisis intervention and support. It is also the model adopted by the GBCG, DOI and US Forest Service.

Experts believe that these techniques and processes, which are used in CIPS can help individuals improve their coping abilities and dramatically decrease the occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorders, lower tension and mitigate a group's reaction to a traumatic event.

The ICISF model provides a number of crisis intervention techniques. The CIPS group leader in coordination with a licensed mental health care clinician will determine the appropriate intervention strategy which may include, but not limited to, a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD). The CISD is the most misunderstood and overused term in the Critical Incident Stress Management processes. The term "debriefing" is used loosely and as a "catch all" for a variety of crisis intervention protocols that are substantially different than the CISD application and structure. As per the ICISF model, a licensed mental health care clinician is required when a debriefing is indicated for personnel.

Peer Supporters providing support in the Great Basin must have received training and certification as CIPS through the ICISF. They are trained to listen, assess and refer, when necessary to a trauma intervention Mental Health Care Professional. Peer Supporters should never be used as a replacement for this professional care and should never function independently. This would put them outside of the scope and boundaries of competence they have been trained for.

TIMELINE STANDARDS

Critical Incident support **is not an emergency**, however, assistance should be ordered as soon as possible. Crisis intervention processes generally start no sooner 48-72 hours after an incident. Crisis intervention can also be provided within a few weeks or longer depending on the incident. It is important

to allow time for affected individuals to disengage operationally, and re-connect with family or friends. Once this occurs individuals are typically emotionally ready to benefit from peer support.

GREAT BASIN INTERAGENCY PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Since chartered by the GBCG in 2001, the Great Basin Peer Support Group have been providing assistance to Fire and Aviation personnel when serious accidents, injuries or death have occurred in the line of duty. Since its inception, fire-related personnel (including, dispatchers, engines, smokejumpers, hotshot, aviation, fire management and others) have attended the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation's Individual & Group crisis intervention classes. They have responded to a variety of fire and aviation line of duty traumatic incidents and provided valuable support. The Great Basin's Critical Incident Peer Support Group are committed to peers helping peers and is available upon request. When needed, the group has access to mental health professionals; who can provide another level of support.

The Great Basin does not maintain "CISM Teams." CIPS groups are ordered through normal dispatch channels and are assembled at the time of request through GBCC. The CIPS group is comprised of peer and group supporters with similar backgrounds and experience as those involved in the critical incident.

COORDINATION RESPONSE AND SERVICES

Great Basin Critical Incident Peer Support Group facilitates the following:

- Situation assessment for managers to help determine the timing and type of support needed for each incident.
- A Peer Support Group to provide crisis management services with access to mental health care professionals who specialize in trauma.
- Request assistance from a Human Resource Specialist to provide information regarding local resources that provide follow up support.
- Support Incident Management Teams, militia and non-fire support personnel affected by an incident.
- Provide peers supporters who can travel to the fire line, spike camp and other remote locations, as needed.

MOBILIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESS

Agency Administrator

- **Identification of the Event**
The Agency Administrator is responsible for identifying a critical event as a critical incident. The Agency Administrator is the highest ranking agency line officer with direct responsibility for the personnel involved in the incident.
- **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**
The Agency Administrator or designee is responsible for requesting CIPS through GBCC. A CISM Coordinator will be assigned to work with the Agency Administrator and designated Peer Group Leader to decide the size and make-up of the group.

A resource order should not be placed until the CISM Coordinator has received information about the incident from the Agency Administrator or designee. The CISM Coordinator will assess the situation, determine the appropriate intervention strategy, determine dates, times, locations and assemble the CIPS group. The CISM Coordinator will provide the information to GBCC who will then request an order from the local dispatch center and fill the order via roster in ROSS.

Generally, an assigned Peer Group Liaison will travel as soon as possible to the unit affected to gather facts, determine timelines and make an assessment of the individuals and groups that have been impacted.

- **Manage Information about the Critical Incident**

Acknowledge to employees that the critical incident has occurred. By providing factual information to your employees, you can help prevent rumors from spreading. Provide a consistent message to all groups. Address any rumors that may be circulating, or concerns employees may voice. Specific information for agency administrators and manager can be found at: <http://gacc.nifc.gov/cism/>

- **Support Employees**

Remember that traumatized employees need structure, facts, peer support, and instructions on what to expect next. Find out what employees are planning to do with their time once they leave work and provide accountability partners. Encourage them to spend time with friends or family members. Coordinate with fire and aviation staff to identify the employees most affected by the traumatic event and offer them a quiet place to be, but don't force them to be isolated if they'd prefer to stay with their co-workers.

Local Dispatch Center

- **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**

The local dispatch center on behalf of the Agency Administrator may be responsible for contacting GBCC to request CIPS.

Great Basin Coordination Center

- **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**

GBCC is responsible for contacting the CIPS Coordinator and requesting Critical Incident support services as soon as possible after receiving a request. GBCC will assist the CISM Coordinator in the facilitating of resource orders as needed via a roster in ROSS.

Critical Incident Peer Support Coordinator

The Great Basin CISM Coordinator is a credentialed crisis intervention specialist who provides situational assessment for Agency Administrators, Managers and others to help determine the appropriate response. The CISM Coordinator will assist in determining the timing and type of support needed for the incident. Tactics are applied at the right time, in the right place and under the right circumstances. The CISM Coordinator will also provide a CIPS group which includes the expertise and screening requirements of a licensed Mental Health Care Professional (Clinician) who is experienced and trained in trauma.

The CISM Coordinator is responsible for the following:

- In consultation with the Agency Administrator makes the decision to mobilize a CIPS Group or provide a different intervention strategy.
- Identifies CIPS Group Leader, based on the nature of the incident, affected personnel, time frames and availability.
- Determines the number and type of peer supporters to respond with the CIPS Group.
- Maintain a roster of licensed and qualified trauma specialist (Clinicians).
- Maintains an active roster of trained and qualified group leaders and peer supporters.
- Coordinates with CRP Response Leader or Serious Accident Investigation Leader to coordinate timing of crisis intervention services.

Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader

A Peer Support Group Leader is a highly respected and trusted person from aspects of fire programs (dispatchers, engine crew members, hotshot and other crews, helitack, smokejumpers, and many other specialties). A Group Leader has participated in numerous assignments as a Peer Supporter and has had enough exposure to various incidents and contacts to have the ability to 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.

A Peer Support Group Leader:

- Will oversee the implementation of the elements of the established program. These elements include a set Standard of Care and established boundaries of competence. 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. Staying 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.
- 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 Clinician(s) in determining the appropriate crisis intervention tactics to be applied with specific individuals and groups.
- Briefing the Clinician 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 to Coordinator/Point of Contact, and dispatch center.

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; dispatch, aviation, direct suppression crews or modules, engines and fire and aviation managers. 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/veteran crew community.

Peer Supporters:

- Assist the CIPS Group and Clinician in providing Crisis Management briefings, Defusings, 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.).
- Are self-sufficient (Travel Card or Credit Card).
- For peers of fireline personnel, they are required to have all of their 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 they 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 they may be called to meet informally with those affected or involved with the critical incident.

Mental Health Care Clinician

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 crisis intervention presentations, to help the affected personnel get comfortable with the Clinician and their role in the process.
- The role of CIPS Group Clinician is to provide affected individuals any information the clinician feels appropriate during and after the peer supporter's presentations.
- CIPS group Clinicians address any issues which are outside of the Peer Supporter's training and established boundary of competence.
- The Clinicians are free to apply their expertise, as they deem necessary.
- When there is a need for the Clinician's role to expand (Defusings/Debriefings) the Peer Supporters role will change to one of support as the Clinician directs the intervention toward the information they feel is essential.
- Due to the ad hoc nature and extremely vast, very rural area protected by the wildland fire community the assigned Clinician should factor in the limited availability of any follow up care, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which is offered.

Ethics, Conduct, and Confidentiality

All 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 credible. All CIPS members must work to maintain themselves worthy of trust, both on assignment and in their professional day to day jobs. Peers who are trustworthy, demonstrate integrity and respect in what they do, are the key element to assisting individuals in crisis.

CISM Coordination with Serious Accident Investigation Teams

Consideration will be given to employees involved in investigations and the learning review team, as to the timing of crisis intervention services. Personnel who have been through an appropriate crisis intervention prior to being interviewed are better able to tell their story and experience with less anxiety. When possible and practical, the CIPS Group should provide crisis intervention to employees prior to being interviewed. The CISM Coordinator is available to provide assistance with the CRP Response Leader to ensure that personnel have access to crisis intervention services.

CIPS and Employee Assistance Program

- **CISM/Peer Support (Short Term)**

CISM is a coordinated program of tactics designed to alleviate negative reactions to traumatic experiences. It is considered to be a short-term, adaptive process that helps individuals return to their daily routines more quickly and includes information and education. EAP cannot provide peer support which is the foundation of the ICISF intervention models utilize. Peer support has been the key to success in instilling trust of our employees to participate in crisis intervention services.

Employees have the option of visiting EAP, and at any time may choose it for assessment and/or on-going counselling. The Peer Support Program can be seen as the connecting link between the employees and EAP services. The Peer Support Program and EAPs often complement each other to help employees, especially for follow-up care after crisis intervention services.

- **EAP (Long Term)**

EAP is almost always recommended for follow up care after crisis intervention has taken place. When requesting assistance from EAP after a critical incident, request a Clinician that specializes in trauma. EAP Clinicians more commonly practice in areas of family problems, substance abuse, etc. and not in the area of trauma.

EAP offers:

- Support during natural disasters.
- Legal and financial advice.
- Grief counseling.
- Available for families.
- A free service that's already paid for.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

Critical Incident

A critical incident is an extraordinary event that overwhelms the usual coping abilities of personnel. Examples of critical incidents include, but are not limited to the following:

- Line of duty death
- Suicide of a co-worker
- Entrapment
- Burn-over
- Knowing the victim of the event
- Serious line of duty injury
- Discovery of a dead body
- Involvement in several stressful events in a short period of time
- Any event that has an unusually powerful impact on personnel

Catastrophic Incident

Catastrophic incidents are those situations which have an extreme impact on numerous individuals or organizations. These incidents may draw significant media attention. The level of trauma to personnel, families and a community is substantial.

CIPS Program

The Great Basin CIPS Committee recruits peers, coordinates training sessions and workshops, and seeks out new clinicians, research and technology in trauma and crisis management to enhance the program.

CIPS Group

A group of individuals consisting of fire and aviation personnel trained in various aspects of crisis intervention. The CIPS Group usually consists of three or four peer group members and a group leader but depends on the incident, numbers of individuals and organizations affected, etc. In addition to peer supporters the group includes Mental Health Care Professionals who specialize in trauma and are familiar with the wildland fire community. The CIPS Group is assembled by the Critical Incident Peer Support Group Coordinator when a request is received.

Crisis Management Briefing (CMB)

A structured meeting designated to provide information about the incident, control rumors, educate about symptoms of distress, inform about basic stress management, and identify resources available for continued support if desired. The goals of a CMB include providing factual information, instill a sense of leadership, reduce chaos, and enhance credibility. The CMB is designed to assist those involved directly or indirectly with the incident and is not intended for the media.

Defusing

A three-step crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogenous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event. The purpose of a defusing is to mitigate the impact of the event, accelerate the recovery process, and assist the need for additional services. A defusing was never intended for and should ever be used on a primary victim.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

This is often provided as a seven-step crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogenous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event. It may be used as part of an integrated package of interventions within the CIPS response. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings require a licensed Mental Health Care Clinician.