



## A Common Understanding for SWA Critical Incident Peer Groups

The Southwest Area Critical Incident Peer Groups are trained to assist their fellow employees by listening without judgment while maintaining confidentiality. They are also trained in positive coping strategies for stress, and to help others validate their thoughts and emotions about an overwhelming trauma or loss. Membership on these teams will vary depending on peer availability, team make-up, and the responses to the event that has occurred.

Every event and personnel affected is different; however, the basic principles and type of support our Peer Groups provide is consistent. A *Common Understanding* is vital to ensure success; but more importantly, ensure the ultimate goal of providing the affected personnel the tools and coping strategies to make them successful in dealing with the event. This provides an overall structure to how our Peer Groups operate and gives insight for new members, as well as Agency Administrators on what to expect.

Qualified Peer Group Members will have training in Individual and Group Crisis Intervention which is usually available every year in at least one Geographic Area. The Southwest can use personnel who have not had this training; however, it is in a “trainee” capacity only with the following guidelines:

- The Trainee must be agreed upon by the CISM Peer Group Leader and SWCC.
- The Trainee must have attended/observed a refresher session or been a participant on SWA CISM Meetings/Conference Calls.
- The Trainee participation must be in a group setting only and is not to be conducting One-on-One Peer sessions.
- The Trainee must plan to attend the Individual and Group Crisis Intervention Course when feasibly possible.

Southwest Area Peer Group activations are coordinated between the Agency Administrator, Peer Group Leader, and SWCC. The following is a basic structure that SWA Peer Groups follow as directed by the Leader.

- **Pre-Response**  
Many of the logistical details are worked out and information is shared regarding what happened, the Peer Group is formed, and overall planning and organization occurs.
- **Agency Administrator In-briefing**  
The Leader meets with the Agency Administrator and additional details are discussed to better prepare for the upcoming Crisis Management Briefing, Defusing, and/or One-on-One's. This allows the Peer Leader to discuss with the Agency Administrator on the process and procedures that the Peer Group will use to assist the affected individuals.

- **Crisis Management Briefing**

The Agency Administrator will initially lead a structured meeting designed to provide information about the incident and control rumors. The goals of a CMB include providing factual information, instill a sense of leadership, reduce chaos, and enhance credibility. The CISM Peer Group will then educate and discuss symptoms of distress, inform about basic stress management, and identify resources available for continued support, if desired.
- **Defusing**

This is where the Peer Group meets with those more directly affected by the incident. The Leader will instruct the Peer Group and establish any needed sideboards or specific protocols.
- **One-on-One's**

Sometimes, more interaction is needed after a CMB and Defusing for individuals affected by the event. A Peer Group member will meet one-on-one to further discuss the typical reactions to traumatic events, reinforce the tools and coping strategies of CISM, and assist the individual with any follow-up needs.
- **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing**

This tool, as part of the CISM intervention is not often used by Southwest Peer Groups. It is used when the affects of an event are significant enough that more assistance is needed beyond the CMB and defusing. This tool requires the presence of a Mental Health Professional.
- **Peer Group After Action Review**

The CISM Peer Group will conduct an AAR prior to completing the assignment and will assess how things went in terms of successes and those things that can be improved upon.
- **Follow-up**

The Peer Group should follow-up with the key affected individuals approximately a week (or as designated by the Leader) after the CISM response. The follow-up should be a check on how affected personnel are doing and reinforce the tools and coping strategies if needed.