

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEF (CISD)**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of a CISD program is to provide timely debriefing and follow-up services, after a critical incident, with the objective of minimizing the likelihood of psychological or stress disorders that may arise out of exposure of traumatic event. This policy will allow YEMSA, and local agencies to facilitate a review of the event in a step by step if the Incident Commander (IC) or any individual calls for a Critical Incident Stress Debrief. All responders that were involved with the event will be mandated to attend meeting within 48 hours. All Employers have agreed to this as a function to better serve the citizens and communities of Yolo County.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The "classic" CISM model was developed by Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell of the University of Maryland for use with emergency services personnel and promulgated by the American Critical Incident Stress Foundation, which was founded in 1989 (the name was changed to the "International Critical Incident Stress Foundation" in 1991 to reflect the expansion of the model beyond US boundaries). Initially developed for firefighters, paramedics and police officers, the use of the Mitchell Model has been expanded for use in natural disasters, school-based incidents, and a variety of other settings, including, in recent years, the U.S. military and survivors of terrorist acts.

What is a Critical Incident?

A Critical Incident is defined here as a workplace event which is extraordinary in nature with the expectation of producing significant reactions on the part of victims or those either directly or indirectly impacted. The following may be affected: Witnesses, employees, colleagues, clients and/or family members all can be affected and can create risk.

Typical examples include: Robberies, Auto Accidents, Client Illness (heart attack in lobby), Severe or Prolonged Illness of Employee (Cancer, AIDS, etc), Sudden Death of Employee, any event that requires Police Officers, Firefighters, Public Safety Personnel, Hospital Personnel and Ambulance Personnel to arrive on an event.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The debriefing is to take the active memories of the event and store them into long term memory. After a traumatic event our minds work to bring "closure" to the incident. Until closure is reached our minds continue to run a memory track of the event in hopes of making the incident make sense and be logical. We continue to "turn over" the situation and review it until our minds feel satisfied that it "now makes sense." A major consequence of a traumatic event is that the person feels that order and control in their life has been lost. The brain keeps turning over the sequence of events to regain order and control. In a debriefing a trained person helps the individuals understand the event, their lack of ability to control situations and then to store the incident into long term memory. Not all situations or persons need a debriefing, but for those persons who continue to not sleep, have anger issues emerge, or continue to have difficulty in focusing attention a debriefing may prevent Post Traumatic Stress

The debriefing will:

- Decrease the company's exposure
- Provide means for emotional expression by individuals involved in the event
- Decrease distressing symptoms and prevent onset of PTSD
- To assimilate the traumatic experience
- To regain/increase capacity for self-control
- To reduce the focus of the event in the daily lives of survivors
- To provide emotional support/enhance group cohesion
- To dispel myths and reduce self-blame
- To restore adaptive levels of trust
- To restore capacity for emotional response
- To alleviate disabling fears and anxieties caused by the trauma
- To provide structure and stability
- To prepare for physical and psychological symptoms that may follow
- To inform individuals about stress
- Stress reactions and survival methods, To promote appropriate and realistic problem-solving
- To assess individual coping skills & make referrals if necessary
- To identify and access additional resources or support systems
- To arrange for effective follow-up
- To obtain closure