

**POLICY/PROCEDURE
FOR
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

DIVISION/UNIT HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	POLICY/PROCEDURE # 455-HHS		
SUBJECT Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)	EFFECTIVE DATE 1/1/2016	LAST REVIEW DATE 2/3/22	RETIREMENT DATE
APPROVED BY	RELATES TO (POLICY/ STATUTE/ORDINANCE)		

POLICY STATEMENT:

The policy of the Sheboygan County Health and Human Services Department is to provide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) that supports staff with the process of minimizing stress and assisting staff with personal and professional difficulties following Critical Incidents that involve intense and unusual demands and circumstances. CISM is a comprehensive, phase sensitive, and integrated multi-component approach to crisis disaster intervention.

The CISM Team will also respond when available to external requests for Critical Incident Stress Management from other counties within the state of WI as requested per Behavioral Health Partnership guidelines. The CISM team may also provide debriefing support to Sheboygan County community partners.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to put in place a clearly defined protocol to reduce potentially harmful or negative experiences as a result of Critical Incidents that may directly or indirectly impact staff or community partners within their work or personal lives.

Recovery from Critical Incident Stress is accelerated when individuals involved recognize their reactions are normal and are provided support and resources to foster a return to a sense of safety and security within the workplace.

DEFINITIONS:

Critical Incidents are unusually challenging events that have the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms. Critical incidents that may require a Crisis Debriefing session may include, but are not limited to:

- client suicide / homicide
- death of a past or current client
- egregious incidents – such as severe child physical and sexual abuse or severe domestic abuse
- physical violence, threats, or assault against a worker

- employee death or tragedies of staff or their immediate families
- community wide tragedy/natural disaster
- & others as deemed appropriate by the CISM leads

Critical Incident Stress is a state of cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioral arousal that accompanies the crisis reaction. However, there are many situations that may evoke stress that is over and above that regarded as normal. These circumstances usually involve some degree of personal or professional threat and often present situations that cannot be managed with routine practices. They are termed *critical incidents* and the stress evoked by them is called *critical incident stress* (CIS)

PROCEDURE:

Please see the [CISM Procedure](#) for in-depth process.

Revision Log

**Please note: The use of a revision log was implemented in 2020, previous revisions are not reflected in this log.*

Revision Number	Revision Date	Summary of Change	Approved By
	11/15/21	Significant updates made to align with the procedure document	

**PROCEDURE FOR
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

DIVISION/UNIT HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	PAGE 1	OF 6	POLICY/PROCEDURE # 455A-HHS
SUBJECT Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Crisis Defusing and Debriefing	EFFECTIVE DATE 1/1/2016	REVISION DATE 3/8/22	DELETION DATE

DEFINITIONS:

1. Critical Incidents are unusually challenging events that have the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms. Critical incidents that may require a Crisis Debriefing session may include, but are not limited to:
 - vicarious or secondary trauma
 - client suicide / homicide
 - death of a past or current client
 - egregious incidents – such as severe child physical and sexual abuse or severe domestic abuse
 - physical violence, threats, or assault against a worker
 - employee death or tragedies of staff or their immediate families
 - community wide tragedy/natural disaster
 - other events that significantly impact a staff member or team

2. Critical Incident Stress is a state of cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioral arousal that accompanies the crisis reaction. However, there are many situations that may evoke stress that is over and above that regarded as normal. These circumstances usually involve some degree of personal or professional threat and often present situations that cannot be managed with routine practices. They are termed *critical incidents* and the stress evoked by them is called *critical incident stress* (CIS)

3. Secondary Traumatic Stress is the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person. In these instances, an individual's psychological coping apparatus has been damaged to the point that their capacity for unaided recovery has been compromised.

4. Crisis Debriefing is a formal and confidential process provided by a trained facilitator in a group format to mitigate the impact of a critical incident and to accelerate the recovery process for the staff members involved. Crisis Debriefing is not an interrogation nor is it to replace the formal investigation or review by the WI Dept. of Children and Families or the WI Dept. of Health Services in those instances where this may be required. Crisis debriefing is not designed to achieve psychological closure, it is not therapy, nor is it a

long-term process. Crisis Debriefing will be scheduled within normal work hours to accommodate workers' schedules whenever possible.

5. Defusing is best described as psychological first aid, with stabilization, ventilation and screening as its core elements. It is intended to assist staff to make the transition from the state of high arousal associated with the Critical Incident to a more normal state to bring the experience of the Critical Incident to a conclusion and allow the opportunity to express immediate concerns. This could occur via a formal defusing process or an informal 1-1 support between a supervisor and staff person.
6. Confidentiality is the ethical principle which requires that information shared by the Staff Member with the Crisis Debriefing Session is not shared with others or documented in any manner. This principle will be strictly adhered to within the Crisis Debriefing Model. Exceptions to confidentiality exist where it conflicts with the Crisis Debriefers' duty to warn or duty to protect the Staff Member. This includes instances of suicidal or homicidal plans or thoughts that may be shared by Staff Members either during or after a Crisis Debriefing Session as a result of the Critical Incident.

PROCEDURE:

Agency Point Person(s) -

Role: The Agency Point Person(s) (APP) prepare/orient all agency staff for CISM, manage requests from staff, and manage agency CISM logistics.

Responsibilities:

Defusing:

When a Critical Incident occurs, the APP should provide information to the supervisor in regard to the Defusing process and support the facilitation process if desired. The APP may also assign a CISM debriefer to assist with the defusing process if needed.

Debriefing:

1. If a request for a Debriefing made from in-house or from within our community, the APP(s) will work with the Agency Staff Member/Supervisor or the community member/agency requesting a Crisis Debriefing session to determine if the situation meets the threshold of a Critical Incident debriefing. If it does not, other options are discussed to assist the person requesting the debriefing. If it does, the request moves forward and the debriefing should occur within the recommended time frame of 1-3 business days to conduct a Crisis Debriefing after the defusing process, if possible.
2. The APP determines in what instances the Critical Incident would require the Crisis Debriefing to be provided by another county.

The Agency Point Person (APP) collaborates with the individual requesting the debriefing session and works with the Debriefers to:

- A. Determine who is impacted by the Critical Incident, ensuring the homogeneity of the group, as well as the need for potential multiple debriefings if necessary.
*Typically line staff should be supported separately from supervisors.
 - 1. The APP will ensure that supervisors are provided with debriefing as needed. CISM-trained supervisors will provide peer-to-peer support to other supervisors.
- B. Share the CISM document *What is a CISM for Staff and Supervisors* with leadership and/or staff before the event to help them choose if this is the best option for them.
- C. APP determines which CISM team members should be notified about the potential need of a defusing/debriefing as well as identifying a lead and support debriefer based on the following:
 - 1. Availability
 - 2. Ensure all debriefers are provided opportunities
 - 3. Determine lead by level of comfortability and experience
 - 4. Eliminate any potential conflict of interest (having worked with anyone involved in the crisis and/ or staff involved in incident)
- D. Guide the supervisor to communicate with staff to determine the best time/day to hold the debriefing.
- E. Determine location. Debriefing may occur in-person (best practice) or via Google Meet if necessary.
 - 1. If held in HHS 8th Street location, the Oasis room should be utilized for the debriefing. The APP will post pre-made signs on both doors to provide advance notice to others who use this room. Signs should be removed after the Debriefing is completed.
 - 2. Off-site locations to be determined.
- F. Should work with the supervisor to complete all fields on the tracking form as appropriate and provide this confidential document to the assigned debriefers once the information (CISM meeting date/time) is completed.
 - 1. While gathering tracking form data, best practice is to communicate via phone or in person to ensure confidentiality.
- G. Should attempt to make sure all impacted staff know about the CISM opportunities (defusing/debriefing). If communication is via email, Blind Carbon Copy with invitees should be used to ensure confidentiality.
- H. Should work with the supervisor and/or outside agency to ensure comfort resources (tissue, water, snacks) are available. Debriefers can supply if the supervisor is unable within our agency. APP should have available EAP info and general CISM business card.

Other responsibilities of APPs:

- 1. Check-in with the Debriefers following a Crisis Debriefing session to offer support and address any concerns.
- 2. Ensure the ongoing education of supervisors and staff about Crisis Debriefing and Defusing, including why it exists, the way in which they can use it, and their roles/responsibilities.

3. Work with the agency's Department Leaders to maintain the CISM team and determine if additional Debriefers are needed.
4. Coordinate biannual report to Management Team
5. Inform the Behavioral Health Partnership of changes to the Agency Administrator and APP, and will complete the quarterly electronic survey administered by the Behavioral Health Partnership for the purposes of collecting information.
6. Organize and facilitate monthly meetings for the team, maintain all records/files, oversee the sustainability and fidelity of the program, and ensure that the team is provided ongoing opportunities for skill development and education.

Agency Staff Member

Role: Agency staff persons are defined as any staff person requesting CISM support.

Responsibilities:

1. Any Staff Member may request a Crisis Debriefing session from the APP, supervisor, or any member of the CISM team. If the request is made with the supervisor or other CISM team member, that person will connect with the APP who will work with an individual to determine what the agency response will be.
2. Staff Member to make a voluntary determination of their participation in a Crisis Debriefing session.
3. The CISM session is considered work time for all participating staff. For staff who document in CMHC, this time needs to be coded under 148.

Supervisor

Role: Supervisors are defined as anyone in a leadership position.

Responsibilities:

1. Supervisors play an important role in helping assess the severity of the impact of the Critical Incident that may not be evident to others. It is important for supervisors to support the mission of the crisis debriefing model and to create an organizational culture for staff involvement within the crisis debriefing process.
2. Supervisors of staff who were directly or indirectly involved in a Critical Incident will conduct a Defusing if deemed necessary. If a Defusing does not occur, the supervisor should make every effort to connect with the staff before the end of the day to ensure psychological well-being.
3. If a Defusing occurs, the Defusing should be conducted when the Critical Incident has concluded and before staff leave work for the day, or as early as reasonably possible the next working day.

Goals of this Defusing meeting are to:

- provide a confidential environment to mitigate the impact of the traumatic event
 - accelerate the recovery process
 - clarify the circumstances of the event & dispel myths or misconceptions
 - assess staff needs
 - demonstrate care and support
 - plan for the immediate future;
 - provide a framework in which recovery can occur; and
 - assess need for debriefing, peer support, or other services
4. Work with APP to assess if more support is needed and debriefing is appropriate. Supervisor will work with APP to coordinate the debriefing.
 5. Encourage and support any staff member who is interested in attending a crisis debriefing session.

Crisis Debriefers

Role: Crisis Debriefers are trained/certified to provide Staff and/or community participants support and resources to overcome the effects of the Critical Incidents and help foster natural resiliency within individuals.

Responsibilities:

- Respond to requests from the APP
- Provide a confidential, safe space for participants to process the event and mitigate acute stressors
- Acknowledge the Critical Incident and participants' responses
- Facilitate an understanding and normalization of responses
- Provide and encourage effective coping strategies
- Help foster recovery and resilience
- Debriefers should leave CISM business cards and Peer Support Program flyer on table with EAP resources for those staff who may desire to reach out for follow up.
- Participate in monthly CISM meeting
- Development and practice skills
- Participate in education

Agency Director

Role: The Agency Director is responsible for providing support, funding, and overall sustainability for the CISM team.

Responsibilities:

The Agency Director may have input into whether the incident meets the definition of a Critical incident, whether external Debriefers should be utilized, and employing other resources to support staff members.

