



# SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

*Division of Social Services  
Health and Human Services Department*

## Sheboygan County Health and Human Services Department

### General Administrative Policy & Procedure Manual

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**SECTION** Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) **POLICY NO.** 1

**DIVISION** All Agency

**SUBJECT** Crisis Defusing & Debriefing

**Issue Date** November 11, 2015 **Effective Date** January 1, 2016

**Revised** June 7, 2018 **Effective Date** June 7, 2018

**Rescinds** N/A

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Policy of the Sheboygan County Health and Human Services Department is to provide Critical Incident Stress Management 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 respond when available to external requests for Critical Incident Stress Management as requested per Behavioral Health Partnership guidelines.

#### **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 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:

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- 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

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)

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.

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.

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.

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.

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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**

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Agency Point Person(s)

**ACTIONS:**

\*Defusing: The Agency Point person(s) may direct a crisis debriefer to support a supervisor in a defusing process if needed.

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

The Agency Point Person(s) work with the Agency Staff Member or the community member/agency requesting a Crisis Debriefing session to determine if the situation meets the definition of a Critical Incident. If it does not, other options are discussed to assist the person requesting the debriefing. If it does, the request moves forward and should occur within the recommended timeframe of 1-10 days to conduct a Crisis Debriefing if possible.

The Agency Point Person collaborates with the individual requesting the debriefing session and works with the debriefer to:

- Determine how many and who is impacted by the Critical Incident.
- Who will be involved in the Crisis Debriefing session?
- When the Crisis Debriefing session will be held.
- How the agency will support the Crisis Debriefing session (safe meeting location, coverage for staff).
- Assist with identifying resources for ongoing support following the Crisis Debriefing session if needed.

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- Determine in what instances the Critical Incident would require the Crisis Debriefing be external and provided by another county.
- All above info is entered into the Intake and Data Tracking form and then shared with the debriefers.

The agency person identifies the debriefers and reviews the above noted information.

If the Oasis room is to be utilized for the debriefing, the agency point person will post premade signs on both doors to provide as much advance notice to others who use this room.

The Agency Point Person will meet with the debriefers following a Crisis Debriefing Session to offer support and address any concerns resulting from the Crisis Debriefing session.

The Agency Point Person ensures 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 responsibilities.

The Agency Point Person ensures that Supervisors are prepared for their roles and responsibilities in supporting the agency's Crisis Debriefing process.

The Agency Point Person will ensure that supervisors are provided with debriefing as needed. CISM trained supervisors will provide peer-to-peer support to other supervisors in cases of needed support after an incident and especially when the supervisor is also expected to assist in providing support to staff.

The Agency Point Person works with the agency's Department Leaders to arrange for and ensure that support needs beyond Crisis Debriefing are accommodated and plays a key role in maintaining an agency team of Crisis Debriefers.

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In addition, the Agency Point Person will inform the Behavioral Health Partnership of changes to the Agency Administrator and Point Person and will complete the quarterly electronic survey administered by the Behavioral Health Partnership for the purposes of collecting information.

The Agency Point Person(s) will determine if there are gaps and additional debriefers are needed.

Agency Staff Member

Any Agency Staff Member may request a Crisis Debriefing session from the Agency Point Person, supervisor or any member of the CISM team. The Agency Point Person will work with the individual requesting the debriefing session to determine if the situation meets the definition of a Critical Incident.

It will be a voluntary decision for each Agency Staff Member to make a determination of their participation in a Crisis Debriefing session. A Supervisor or Division Leader may request that a Staff Member attend a Crisis Debriefing session.

Supervisor

Supervisors of staff who were directly or indirectly involved in a Critical Incident will conduct a Defusing. The Agency Point Person, Division Leader, or any CISM team member may participate when appropriate.

This 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:

- mitigate the impact of the traumatic event
- accelerate the recovery process
- clarify the circumstances of the event
- assess staff needs

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- demonstrate care and support
- plan for the immediate future; and provide a framework in which recovery can occur
- Assess need for debriefing and other services

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.

Crisis Debriefing

It is the function of the Crisis Debriefing to assist Agency Staff Members and community to use their abilities to overcome the effects of the Critical Incident and to help foster natural resiliency within individuals.

Core functions of the Crisis Debriefing include to:

- help stabilize Agency Staff Members by meeting basic needs and mitigating acute stressors
- acknowledge the Critical Incident and Agency Staff Members reactions
- facilitate an understanding and normalization of reactions
- encourage effective coping strategies
- help facilitate recovery or referral as needed.

Crisis Debriefings may suggest additional support through EAP or community based resources to those Agency Staff Members they believe would benefit from this upon conclusion of the Crisis Debriefing session.

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Crisis Debriefers are expected to be an active participant in the monthly meetings and trainings as appropriate.

Crisis Debriefers will educate agency staff on the benefits and procedures of CISM.

Lead debriefer is responsible for completing second half of Data Tracking form and getting this data to the Point Person for record keeping (date, how many attended, internal/external and this info is then provided to the Behavioral Health Training Partnership on a quarterly basis).

Upon completion all data is deleted from computer and/no shred – no records are to be kept on debriefing sessions with the exception of the above).

Follow up:

With external debriefing Lead debriefer will check in with contact person within a week to see if additional support is needed.

With internal debriefings, the CISM team will work together to follow up with participants within one week. One attempt to contact each participant will be made.

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Agency Director

The Agency Director is responsible for providing support and structure to the organization.

At times during the Crisis Debriefing procedure, it may be necessary for the Agency Point Person to inform the Agency Director, manager, and supervisor about decisions that are being made to implement the process.

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.

**CROSS-REFERENCES**

N/A.

**SIGNATORY RESPONSIBILITY**

<b>Director</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Managers' Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>
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