



Human Services and Health Department Policies and Procedures

POLICY TITLE		POLICY NUMBER
Crisis Debriefing		17-19
APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE	EFFECTIVE DATE
Becky Bell	4/6/18	4/6/18
DIVISION	PROGRAM	
all	all	

POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

The Policy of the Dodge County Human Services and Health 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 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. These Critical Incidents differ from Secondary Traumatic Stress in that Critical Incidents involve direct exposure to the incident while Secondary Traumatic Stress is a result of indirect exposure to trauma. Crisis Debriefing will include focusing on attending to the physical and emotional needs of staff as well as helping re-establish a sense of safety and security within the work place. Recovery from Critical Incident Stress is accelerated when individuals involved recognize their reactions, are taught the reasons for their symptoms, and are helped to take steps to look after themselves.

RELATED DEFINITIONS:

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.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS are unusually challenging events that have the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms. These incidents do require considerable assistance to recover appropriately, but in these instances the capacity for an individual's recovery has not been affected. 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

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.

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. 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(S)

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIONS FOR EACH ROLE:

1) Agency Point Person

The Agency Point Person prepares/orients all agency staff for Crisis Debriefing, manages requests for Crisis Debriefing from staff, and manages agency Crisis Debriefing logistics. The Agency Point Person works with the Agency Staff Member 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. It will be the goal of the Agency Point Person to have the Crisis Debriefing session conducted within one week of the Critical Incident if at all possible. 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.

The Agency Point Person identifies the debriefers through collaboration 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 where agency staff will go for ongoing support following the Crisis Debriefing session if needed.

There may be situations where the Critical Incident would require the Crisis Debriefers be external from another county. 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, 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 works with the agency's Division Managers 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.

2) Agency Staff Member

Any Agency Staff Member may request a Crisis Debriefing session. 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. The Agency Staff Member requesting the Crisis Debriefing will work with the Agency Point Person to determine which of the agency Debriefers would be preferred to conduct the Debriefing Session.

3) Supervisor

Supervisors of staff who were directly or indirectly involved in a Critical Incident will conduct a structured meeting aimed at Defusing the immediate impact of the Critical Incident. The Agency Point Person or other Division Manager may participate when appropriate.

This Defusing meeting should be conducted when the Critical Incident has concluded and before staff leave work for the day.

Goals of this Defusing meeting are to:

- restore the functioning to the organizational structures
- clarify the circumstances of the event
- assess staff needs
- demonstrate care and support
- plan for the immediate future; and provide a framework in which recovery can occur.

Supervisors have a clear understanding of their unit staff needs and this level of responsiveness provides tangible support in these Critical Incidents. 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.

4) Crisis Debriefer

It is the function of the Crisis Debriefer to assist Agency Staff Members 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 Debriefer 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 Debriefers will recommend 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.

4) Division Managers

The Division Manager 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 Division Manager about decisions that are being made to implement the process. Division Managers 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.