

12. Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

General Comments

Rhode Island Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT)

The Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) has developed a department-wide emergency command structure and is additionally responsible for ongoing development and management of the state's Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT). The DBHRT provides a continuum of behavioral health response assets, prepared to respond to local, regional and/or statewide disasters. It is comprised of the BHDDH Internal Team and seven, specially-trained regional response teams. To date, over 650 individuals have been certified to serve on the DBHRT. There is an active roster of nearly 400 trained behavioral health responders.

In response to a mass casualty event or other major disaster, BHDDH provides coordination and direction of the behavioral health response in concert with RIEMA. Throughout the recovery/post-disaster phase, BHDDH coordinates community education on the behavioral health impact of the event, and for those directly affected by the event, psychological first aid, crisis intervention, assessment and treatment referral services as necessary.

Upon request, BHDDH will participate in the RIEMA EOC and may also stand up its command center in Barry Hall at the John O. Pastore Complex, Cranston, RI. BHDDH will determine the assignment of behavioral health assets throughout the management of a mass casualty incident or other disaster.

Rhode Island Critical Incident Stress Management TEAM, Inc. (RI CISM TEAM)

The RI Critical Incident Stress Management, TEAM, Inc. (RI CISM TEAM) is responsible for responding to and providing for the support needs of first responders. Specifically, in the emergency response phase, the RI CISM TEAM provides needs assessment, triage if necessary, pre- and post-demobilizations, anticipatory guidance, preparing the responder for any physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral or spiritual reactions they or their fellow workers might have during the hours, weeks, and months following an event. In addition, defusings, stress management, chaplaincy support and crisis intervention at the disaster site and respite center(s) will be provided. Chair massage is also available through the joint efforts of the RI CISM TEAM and the Crisis Massage Team of RI.

First responders are defined as those individuals or agency personnel who respond to a request for assistance from the IC.

In early post impact and recovery phases, the RI CISM TEAM will provide follow-up services for all first responders and their families as appropriate. For disaster interventions, a system of mutual aid is available to the RI CISM TEAM through a MOU with the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (ICISF). The RI CISM TEAM will utilize only those credentialed peers, chaplains, and mental health professionals who abide by the protocol of the ICISF and the RI CISM TEAM.