

BRIDGEWATER POLICE SERVICES

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT GOG

MISSION STATEMENT

The role of Bridgewater Police Services Peer Support Team is to help mitigate the impact of traumatic stress on the emergency service provider.

I. GENERAL OPERATING GUIDELINE

The Bridgewater Police Services will provide peer and psychological support for employees involved in highly stressful situations encountered in the course of their duties. This will be accomplished through the use of a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Peer Support Team. The CISM/Peer Support Team may be comprised of sworn and civilian employees, appropriate mental health professionals and other police agency CISM/Peer Support Team members who are selected on the basis of their knowledge, skill, experience, and abilities in dealing with this type of situation.

II. PROCEDURE

A. Definition - A critical incident is any situation faced by emergency service personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function during or after the incident.

B. COMPOSITION OF THE CISM/PEER SUPPORT TEAM

Employees interested in becoming members of the CISM/Peer Support Team must submit a letter of interest to Employee & Family Assistance Committee chairperson, Cst. Danny MacPhee to be considered. (**NOTE: Selection criteria to be developed.**) CISM/Peer Support Team members are selected by the Chairperson of the EFAC, BPS chaplain and CISM Team

Co-ordinator. The CISM/Peer Support Team may be composed of the following team members:

1. A CISM/Peer Support Team Co-ordinator who has successfully completed, at a minimum, the Advanced Group Crisis Interventions course, a CISM Strategic Planning course plus have CISM experience.
2. Team members, both sworn and civilian, who have successfully completed at least the "Assisting Individuals in Crisis" and the "Critical Incident Stress Management: Group Crisis Interventions" courses through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).
3. A mental health professional that has experience in emergency response situations (especially police services) plus relevant CISM training.
4. CISM/Peer Support Team Members from other agencies will also be made available at the Team Co-ordinator's request, based on the needs of the employee(s) involved in the critical incident.
5. The Bridgewater Police Service's Chaplain(s).

C. FAMILY ASSISTANCE

The Bridgewater Police Services Chaplain, Employee Assistance Program, South Shore Mental Health Services, and any other resources available will be utilized to work out arrangements for family assistance in crisis situations.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CISM/PEER SUPPORT TEAM

1. The CISM/Peer Support Team will respond upon request of a BPS Supervisor, Chief or Deputy Chief and / or the Team Co-ordinator to any incident where an employee(s) has/have been subjected to significantly abnormal stress either during or after a police incident.

Evaluation of the need for a CISM session may be very obvious or less clear-cut. The following are general considerations that may aid in determining the need for some form of debriefing, or simply a referral:

- a. The number of individuals who participated in the event and may be negatively affected
- b. The type of symptoms being reported by participants in the event
- c. Changes in behavior by participants in the event
- d. Regression in behavior by participants in the event
- e. Determine if group members are having problems with acute or delayed stress and if they would benefit by speaking with peers
- f. Determine if group members are asking for information on stress management or if a formal debriefing is necessary

Following evaluation, it is important to note that services be offered freely if indicated.

The following types of incidents will almost certainly involve CISM in some manner:

- a. Line of Duty Death (LODD), or serious line of duty injury (LODI) of a police officer
- b. Mass casualty incidents
- c. Prolonged or tactical operations
- d. Suicide of a BPS officer/employee
- e. Death or serious injury of a civilian resulting from emergency operations (e.g. auto accident involving BPS vehicle, etc.)
- f. Death of a child, or violence to a child by an adult
- g. Loss of life to a civilian following extraordinary and prolonged rescue attempt
- h. Incidents attracting unusual, critical, or extensive news media coverage
- i. Any incident charged with profound emotion
- j. Any incident in which the circumstances are so unusual, or the sights and sounds so distressing, as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction
- k. Situations involving other Bridgewater Town departments, based upon request.
- l. Official request for mutual aid assistance / support from another Municipal or Federal Police agency.

***Note: Attendance at debriefings for these types of incidents is strongly encouraged for all persons working at the scene of the incident.**

2. When a request is made for a call-out of the CISM/Peer Support Team, the team leader will be contacted and advised of the nature of the incident.
 - a. The team leader will determine the number of members required and contact them accordingly.
3. The CISM/Peer Support Team will be appropriately compensated when formally activated to assist with an official department need for support or debriefing.

E. CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING (CISD) NEEDS

1. At the conclusion of a critical incident, the appropriate BPS Supervisor, or the CISM/Peer Support Team Leader, may determine that a CISD or another type of group intervention is recommended for employees who were directly or indirectly involved in the critical incident.

CISDs are normally voluntary; however, participation can be mandatory at the discretion of the BPS Supervisor / Chief / Deputy Chief, at which time employees will be appropriately compensated.

CISDs will normally be held within three (3) to seven (7) days of the critical incident. Examples of types of incidents that may result in a mandatory CISD include:

- a. Line of duty death (LODD) of an employee.
- b. Officer involved shooting.
- c. Serious line of duty injury (LODI) to an employee.
- d. Unexpected death of an employee, including suicide.
- e. Serious injury to a citizen as a result of a police action.

F. DEFUSING AND PEER SUPPORT NEEDS

The CISM/Peer Support Team can also provide defusing and peer support contacts that involve informal one-on-one interaction between a team member and an employee to provide support, education, and referral services.

1. An employee who desires to speak to a team member in regards to a defusing or peer support situation may communicate directly with a team member, without the knowledge or approval of supervisory personnel.
 - a. The content of the contact and the fact that the contact was made shall remain confidential, subject to the provisions of this GOG.
 - b. These contacts are short term in nature and are designed to address the immediate needs of the employee.
 - c. Depending upon the nature of the employee's needs, a professional referral for counseling may be recommended.

2. Informal one-on-one peer counseling/support will not be compensated on duty as compensation would prompt the generation of a report and other related documentation that may breach the confidentiality of the counseling.

3. Where appropriate, a CISM team member will contact family members of involved Bridgewater Police Services employees to offer various levels of support.

4. Confidentiality shall be maintained by CISM/Peer Support Team members on the information received from the individual employee.

a. Confidentiality shall be extended to employees during contacts by a CISM/Peer Support Team member(s) for violations of Bridgewater Police Services policy not amounting to a violation of the law enforced by the Bridgewater Police Services, and where there is no immediate threat to the employee or others. Policy violations amounting to a violation of the law or, in cases involving immediate threats to others, will be documented by the CISM/Peer Support Team members and submitted to the Chief of Police for review and/or appropriate action.

b. Compromising a confidence will be considered a violation of Bridgewater Police Services policy.

Members of the CISM/Peer Support Team who violate the confidentiality of an employee contact will be subject to disciplinary action and removal from the team.

c. Accusations of a breach of confidentiality by a CISM/Peer Support Member will be made in writing and submitted directly to the Chief of Police for review and/or appropriate action.

G. CISM/PEER SUPPORT OPERATIONS ANNUAL REVIEW

1. The CISM/Peer Support Team Leader will conduct an annual review of CISM/Peer Support related operations.

2. Based on this review, the program will be maintained, altered, or discontinued, and procedures for handling CISM/Peer Support matters may be revised.