

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Office of Community Services



DCFS CISM TEAM

Providing CISM services to staff in Louisiana's
Child Welfare System



DCFS Statewide Critical Incident Stress Management Team

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) provides the public child welfare functions of the State of Louisiana. The responsibilities of the staff include providing child protective services, making permanent plans for foster children and meeting their daily maintenance needs, and making adoptive placements for foster children freed for adoption.

The mission of the DCFS CISM Team is to serve as a support system that enables staff to address stress and trauma associated with the job. The team has as its paramount concern the development, implementation and administration of a system of interventions designed to prevent and mitigate debilitating stress experienced by DCFS staff as the result of exposure to direct and indirect traumatic events. The team is to respond to and address the needs of DCFS staff statewide who are experiencing stress or trauma from critical incidents that are job related. The aim is to diminish the impact of a critical incident and to assist staff in recovering as soon as possible from the stress associated with the event. Intervention services are also available for foster parents who experience a critical incident related to a foster child placed in their home. Critical Incident Stress Management services offered to DCFS staff and foster parents are free. The team is funded by the Department of Children and Family Services.

Most child welfare staff enters this field because of their concern for children and families, and because of their desire to make a difference in the life of a child. Over the last decade, the types of families that we work with and the complexity of their problems have changed. Because of the nature of crises and problems occurring in families, staff are more prone to experience verbal threats, and in some instances physical violence. In addition to critical incidents associated with self, staff also are frequently burdened by the death of a child in their caseloads, are observers of critical incidents occurring with co-workers, or experience trauma of a tertiary nature. By virtue of staff's profession, they are at risk of becoming victims of direct or indirect stressful and traumatic events.

In an effort to demonstrate a philosophy and belief in the importance and value of staff, and a concern about their welfare and well-being, the Office of Community Service began development of a comprehensive three level Stress Management Initiative in August 1999. The role of the first level is to educate staff related to stress and stress reduction techniques, to provide ongoing support to staff, and to activate staff immediately following a critical incident. The second level is the ongoing offering of statewide training on vicarious trauma stress. The third level is a statewide DCFS CISM Team to provide intervention services—crisis management briefing, one-to-one crisis intervention, debriefing, defusing, follow-up services, and organizational consultation, and linkage to professional contact when needed—after staff have experienced a critical incident. These interventions are offered to prevent and/or detrimental psychological reactions to traumatic events. This third level of response became functional January 2000.

DCFS Critical Incident Stress Management Team

General Organizations Overview

Team Coordinator-

- ✓ Serves as the day to day manager of the team
- ✓ Responsible for dispatching team members to provide CISM interventions, arranging and leading team meetings, maintaining debriefing related records, and recruiting for new members
- ✓ Works with the DCFS Training and Staff Development Section and other members to assure that the educational needs of the team are met
- ✓ Keeps abreast of research in this area
- ✓ Maintains roster of members

Assistant Team Coordinator – takes over the responsibilities of the coordinator when she/he is not available

- ✓ Works closely with team coordinator
- ✓ Monitors the debriefings provided and offer suggestions
- ✓ Assists the coordinator in developing appropriate CISM continuing education
- ✓ Assists in the membership selection process
- ✓ Maintains a comprehensive list of referral resources
- ✓ Assures that follow up services are provided to those in need
- ✓ Offers clinical guidance to coordinator and team members

Steering Committee-

- ✓ Develop internal policy and procedure for small group functioning
- ✓ Assists in identifying training needs
- ✓ Assists in developing criteria for team membership
- ✓ Assist in the membership selection process
- ✓ Formulates group rules
- ✓ Creates the process for reporting infractions
- ✓ Establishes disciplinary measures

Team Leaders-

- ✓ Leads the three or four member team assigned to provide a formal debriefing
- ✓ Assures that the other members of his team know their assigned role during a debriefing session
- ✓ Encourages the debriefing group participants to discuss their traumatic event and observes the overall psychological well-being of the group and any individual who may be experiencing more distress than the others
- ✓ Helps keep the group focused and the discussion balanced
- ✓ Responsible for providing the coordinator statistical data of the debriefing and recommendations for any follow up action needed.

Team Members – responsible for reviewing information received about the critical incident, and accepting and carrying out assigned role during the debriefing session and other intervention.

DCFS Media staff – responsible for discussing with the media any critical incident that receives media attention. Will not discuss information regarding the actual debriefing or intervention, but will primarily comment on the incident and its general impact on staff.

Critical Incidents Defined

Priority Incidents for Reporting and Assessment by Coordinator, Regional Administrator or Division Director

- ✓ Death of a child – active case
- ✓ Death of a foster child
- ✓ Assault against a staff member and/or threats that include weapons
- ✓ Death of a co-worker in the line of duty
- ✓ Intense media coverage of an incident
- ✓ Lawsuits that impact staff
- ✓ Fire, bomb threats, major disaster

Discretionary

- ✓ Accident resulting in client or staff injury
- ✓ Discriminatory incident based on race, religion, gender or sexual orientation
- ✓ Death of child or parent – closed case
- ✓ Abuse or criminal charges against a staff member
- ✓ Death of a staff member
- ✓ General child fatality (due to nature of death or affect of cumulative fatalities)
- ✓ Other incidents producing trauma

DEFINITION OF TEAM QUALIFICATIONS

Team Coordinator

Education/Experience

- ❖ Master of Social Work Degree
- ❖ At least seven years of employment with agency
- ❖ Work in State Office capacity
- ❖ Experience working with Regional Administrators
- ❖ Completed Basic CISM and Peer Intervention Training provided by ICISF
- ❖ Demonstrate competence in CISM interventions
- ❖ Experience in data collection and analysis

Other

- ❖ Must have organization skills and the ability to be flexible, diplomatic, and to problem solve.
- ❖ Must be approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Community Services and the Assistant Director of Field Services

Assistant Coordinator – Same as Coordinator

Clinical Director

Education/Experience

- ❖ Master of Social Work Degree
- ❖ Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- ❖ At least seven years of employment with agency
- ❖ At least supervisory level staff
- ❖ Experience working with Regional Administrators
- ❖ Completed Basic CISM and Peer Intervention Training provided by ICISF
- ❖ Demonstrate competence in the CISM interventions

Other

- ❖ Must have the ability to be flexible, to be diplomatic, and to problem solve. Must be approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Community Services and the Assistant Director of Field Services

Steering Committee

Education/Experience

- ❖ At least four years of employment with agency
- ❖ Flexible schedule
- ❖ Completed Basic CISM Training
- ❖ Demonstrate competence in the CISM interventions

Others

- ❖ Recommended and approved by the general team

Team Leader

- ❖ Completed Basic CISM training provided by ICISF
- ❖ Participated in at least one debriefing

Team Members

- ❖ 2 years of employment with the agency
- ❖ Must be in good standing
- ❖ Exhibit competence in working with people
- ❖ Recommended by Supervisor and Regional Administrator

DUTIES OF THE DCFS CISM COORDINATOR

1. Ensures that an adequate pool of staff comprises the DCFS CISM Team at any point in time and that they are available to respond to critical incidents experienced by agency employees.
2. Ensures that the members of the DCFS CISM Team receive initial and ongoing task specific training.
3. Coordinates the DCFS CISM Team by:
 - ❖ Overseeing the functioning of the DCFS CISM Team
 - ❖ Establishing and maintaining duty roster
 - ❖ Arranging and chairing quarterly team meeting
 - ❖ Ensuring distribution of minutes, agendas, policy procedures and protocol
 - ❖ Ensuring compliance with policy, procedures and protocol
 - ❖ Scheduling education/training in conjunction with quarterly meetings
4. Provides OCS CISM intake by:
 - ❖ Receiving initial referrals and determining appropriate level of response
 - ❖ Initiating response by notifying and dispatching DCFS CISM Team member
 - ❖ On occasion, attending and providing defusing, debriefing or other intervention services
5. Provide consultation and debriefing to DCFS CISM Team members after their attendance at a critical incident intervention.
6. Provides consultation by:
 - ❖ Consulting with front line and management staff around referral to private services
 - ❖ Consulting on critical incident defusing and debriefing with agency staff as requested
 - ❖ Exploring opportunities for integration of learning about trauma assessment and trauma response within general service provision
 - ❖ Exploring the feasibility of extending trauma services to foster parents and clients and foster children and consideration of families in the event of a line of duty death.
7. Maintains a library of literature and audio/visual material for loan and distribution to DCFS CISM Team members.
8. Keeps abreast of current research, findings and theories of CISM and related topics
9. Documents services provided by the DCFS CISM Team and make required management reports.

ROLES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

To oversee the implementation of the approved DCFS Critical Incident Stress Management procedures, including the work of the Coordinator and the DCFS CISM Team.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To steer the work of the DCFS CISM Team.
2. To ensure a cross-section of members who are committed to participating in the implementation and maintenance of the DCFS CISM Team.
3. To develop and implement a communication strategy to ensure that all staff are familiar with the approved procedures and protocol.
4. To conduct a thorough evaluation of the implementation and ongoing work of the DCFS CISM Team.
5. To explore the feasibility of expanding trauma services to foster parents, foster children and clients, and consideration of families in the event of a line of duty death.
6. To facilitate training opportunities which maximize the learning of this CISM process and interventions.

DUTIES OF DCFS CISM TEAM MEMBERS

- Respond to requests by the Coordinator to provide support to staff through defusing, debriefing, or other CISM interventions.
- Team leader reports back to the coordinator after defusing, debriefing and/or other intervention as required by procedure and protocol.
- Follow up with a phone call to assigned participants appropriately 7 days after a defusing or debriefing.
- Give participants evaluation survey and request its return to Coordinator.
- Attend OCS CISM team meetings.
- Participate in quarterly training as required.
- Adhere to all policies, procedures and protocol established by the DCFS CISM team.
- Participate in DCFS CISM interventions when contacted and informs Coordinators of inability to do so due to vacation, illness or other reason resulting in extended unavailability.
- Educate and inform staff around Critical Incident Stress and related topics.

DCFS CISM TEAM RULES

Recognizing the standard of care as prescribed by the CISM model that we have adopted as our method for addressing critical incidents, we do hereby establish the following rules that are congruent with the model. Any infraction of these rules may subject a team member to suspension for the team.

- Members are to maintain strict confidentiality regarding any information acquired through the performance of DCFS CISM Team duties.
- Members are required to follow the policies, procedures and directives regarding team or program activity.
- Members are not to organize or attempt to organize any type of defusing or debriefing within DCFS without the knowledge or consent of the DCFS CISM Team Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator.
- Members are to attend DCFS Team meetings or training regularly.
- Members are expected to be present at an assigned defusing, debriefing or other intervention when a commitment has been made to do so.
- All members must attend basic training prior to participating in a defusing, debriefing, or other interventions.
- Members are not to act against the expressed directions of the DCFS CISM Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator.
- Members are to comply with the duties as described in *Duties of DCFS CISM Team Members*.
- The Coordinator and the Steering Committee will jointly make decisions regarding revocation or suspension of members.

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

- ✓ Coordinator will contact group members and assign the leader. The leader is responsible for the following:
 - ❖ Coordinating with the RA or Response and Recovery Team regarding location of site, refreshments, names of participant, etc.
 - ❖ Contacting other assigned team members to discuss time of arrival and plans
 - ❖ Coordinating on-site communication, setting-up room and assigning roles to team members
 - ❖ Leading the group in the discussion of the incident
 - ❖ Keeping the group focused and the discussion balanced
 - ❖ Making follow-up assignments
 - ❖ Notifying the coordinator of interventions provided and other statistical data
- ✓ The debriefing should be held off site (If possible)
- ✓ The person assigned the mental health role should be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- ✓ As much as possible, the team should reflect the make-up of the participants
- ✓ Presiding team members should have had no role in the incident
- ✓ In most cases, it is desirable that the team members are from a different region than that of the participants.
- ✓ There will be no note taking during the debriefing and no notes on the content of the debriefing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a key principle of the DCFS CISM Team and a vital component to the credibility and success of the program. Staff who have experienced critical incidents must be assured that information shared with the DCFS CISM Team member will not be shared outside the session.

The following are crucial elements of the confidentiality policy:

- ✓ The fact that the critical incident has occurred, and a defusing, debriefing session or other intervention has taken place should be acknowledged openly. The content of the defusing, debriefing session or other intervention and the individual's response must be kept confidential
- ✓ Exceptions to keeping the responses confidential would be situations where there is a threat of harm to self or others, or disclosures of child abuse
- ✓ No notes or records are made during or after the session. The Coordinator completes an initial intake form which documents the incident and person(s) involved for the purpose of dispatching the DCFS CISM Team members to the scene.
- ✓ As stated in the principles of the CISM, defusing and debriefing must be completely separated from any procedural review or accountability process the organization may be required to conduct.
- ✓ The rules governing confidentiality will be explained to participants at the beginning of each defusing and debriefing session. The agreement of all participants to the rules will be secured before the session begins.
- ✓ Failure to comply with the rules governing confidentiality is grounds for dismissal from the DCFS CISM Team.

REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION
OF
MEMBERSHIP ON DCFS CISM TEAM SUPPORT TEAM

Membership on the DCFS CISM Team is revocable upon the recommendation of the DCFS CISM Coordinator and the approval of the CISM Steering Committee. Revocation or suspension is appropriate for, but not limited to the following:

- ✓ Failure to maintain strict confidentiality regarding any information acquired through the performance of DCFS CISM duties.
- ✓ Failure to follow policies, procedures and directives regarding team or program activity
- ✓ Organizing or attempting to organize any type of defusing or debriefing within DCFS without the knowledge or consent of DCFS CISM Coordinator
- ✓ Continued absenteeism at DCFS CISM meetings or training. Must attend two of the four meetings and training per year
- ✓ Failure to be present at an assigned defusing or debriefing when a commitment has been made to do so
- ✓ Acting against the express direction of the DCFS CISM Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator or Steering Committee
- ✓ Failure to comply with duties as described in *Duties of DCFS CISM Team Members*

STEPS AND TIME FRAMES FOR REFERRAL AND RESPONSE

The following steps are developed to aid in the timely response to a critical incident. The Critical Incident Stress Management model indicates that a defusing works best if held with eight hours of the traumatic event and a debriefing is most effective if held within 24-72 hours of the traumatic event. Although a debriefing can be provide done to ten days post crisis, the DCFS CISM Team desires to respond as quickly as possible to staff experiencing a traumatic event. Because we understand that is some situations persons involved in the incident may not recognize the need for assistance, we have designed this notification procedure in a manner that allows for persons other than those involved to be the informant. When calling to report an incident to the coordinator, always identify that as the nature of your call.

Steps	Time Frame
❖ Notification to immediate supervisor, District Supervisor, or CISM member of critical incident by any agency staff aware of the incident	Immediately
❖ Supervisor/DS or CISM member notifies Coordinator and Regional Administrator	Immediately
❖ Coordinator contacts Regional Administrator (or RA calls Coordinator) to discuss situation and determine options available	Immediately
❖ Coordinator dispatches one or two DCFS CISM persons to scene for assessment, and intervention if appropriate. They will report findings to Coordinator.	Same Day
❖ Coordinator contacts DCFS CISM team members (if needed)	Same Day
❖ Debriefing provided by selected DCFS CISM team members	24-72 hours
❖ Team members follow-up with participants	Within 7 Days
❖ Team leader submits statistical data to coordinator	Within 10 Days
❖ Coordinator follow-up with Regional Administrator	Within 10 Days

RECRUITMENT AND NEW MEMBERS

- Recruitment for new members will occur on an annual basis
- An announcement with application will be sent to each regional and parish office requesting that completed applications be returned by interested members.
- It is desirable that the DCFS CISM Team reflect a cross section of the employees of the agency. Therefore, the clerical and paraprofessional staff will be included in the makeup of the team.
- Candidates for the DCFS CISM Team are required to submit an application and request that three references mail letters directly to the Coordinator. One of the three references should be the current supervisor, and one should be a co-worker.
- The Coordinator will contact the Regional Administrator for a recommendation prior to the selection of a staff person for membership.
- All applications will be accepted and members selected without regard to race, gender, religion, culture, ethnicity, or national origin.

**DCFS CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM
INTERVENTIION REQUEST FORM**

Region: _____ Parish Office (if applicable): _____

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Please give a brief description of the Incident:

Name of person(s) directly involved in the incident:

State the status of those directly involved:

State the status of staff who are secondary and tertiary victims:

State the signs and symptoms of distress that being displayed:

Are the symptoms growing worse at time passes? ____ Yes ____ No

State the behavioral changes that are evident:

Name other concurrent stressors that are occurring:

Planned location for the DCFS CISM intervention:

Number of people to be included in the intervention: _____

Submitted by : _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

Title

DCFS CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM

**State Office Reply
To
Intervention Request Form**

- I. The following intervention will be initiated by DCFS CISM Team:

- II. Debriefing team dispatched _____ Yes _____ No

The following debriefing team members dispatched: _____ (Leader)

_____, _____, and
_____.

The debriefing will be held at (Location) _____ on (Date) _____
at (time) _____. The local contact person is _____, (Title)
_____, (Phone) _____.

Signature of Coordinator

Date

DCFS CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM
INTERVENTION FEEDBACK SURVEY

To assist us in satisfactory addressing your needs and responding to critical incidents as proficiently as possible, we ask that you complete this short feedback form.

1. I participated in the following intervention rendered by the DCFS CISM TEAM:

☐ Defusing ☐ Debriefing ☐ One-to-One
☐ Other Intervention: Please specify: _____

2. I found the DCFS CISM Team intervention to be:

☐ Very Helpful ☐ Somewhat Helpful ☐ Somewhat Unhelpful
☐ Very Unhelpful

3. The response to the critical incident by the DCFS CISM Team was:

☐ Too Early ☐ Timely ☐ Too Late

4. Was the length of time spent with you sufficient? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. The information provided related to this incident and stress management was:

☐ Adequate ☐ Somewhat Adequate ☐ Somewhat Inadequate
☐ Inadequate

6. The information provided helped me understand my own reactions and emotions:

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. I believe that the services received will help me understand my own reactions and emotions

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. My participation was voluntary Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please specify why you participated:

9. My overall satisfaction with the services received from the DCFS CISM Team is:

Comments:

Please return to the group leader or mail within two weeks to:

Deborah Cage, DCFS CISM Team Coordinator
Department of Children and Family Services
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Baton Rouge, LA 70821