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Revision: 07/15/14	CHAD CHRONISTER, SHERIFF	
Reviewed: 05/11/20	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE	Page: 1 of 3
SUBJECT: CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT		

- I. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to define guidelines in regard to Critical Incident Stress Management.
- II. **SCOPE:** This procedure shall apply to all Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office personnel and their families.
- III. **DISCUSSION:** Deputies, police, and other emergency service workers are sometimes involved in traumatic or highly stressful events, and may experience some form of post-incident stress related symptoms. Most officers suffer no long term ill effects; however, some experience continuing or delayed stress related reactions to those incidents. Without professional intervention, those employees may continue to experience detrimental effects and may show declining work performance, deterioration of family relationships, and / or increased health problems.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a therapeutic and educational intervention process designed to minimize the impact of critical incidents on deputies, police and other emergency service workers. It involves peer group support during, immediately after, and in the days following a critical incident. The CISM program is designed to complement the agency's existing stress management programs that include stress awareness classes and consultation with a psychological professional. It is available to both sworn and non-sworn employees.

IV. **DEFINITIONS:**

- A. **Critical Incident** - A situation faced by deputies, police officers, or emergency service workers that may cause unusually strong emotional reactions, and have the potential to interfere with the ability to function either at an incident scene or at a later time. **Note:** What is a critical incident for one person may not be for another.
- B. **Stress Reaction Symptoms** - Physical and emotional symptoms that originate with a specific critical incident may include nightmares, flashbacks, fatigue, nausea, concentration and memory problems, anxiety, depression, intestinal problems, etc.
- C. **CISM Team** - A multi-disciplinary team composed of a psychologist, trained mental health professionals, and peer debriefers from various emergency services, including deputies, police, fire, EMS, dispatchers, hospital personnel, etc.
- D. **Peers** - Volunteers who have been trained to provide support to emergency service workers after a critical incident. Volunteers have experienced the same pressures and job experiences as those they seek to help.

- E. **Debriefing** - An organized group discussion with deputies, police, or other emergency service workers who have experienced a critical incident. The discussion of the event is designed to mitigate the potential for long-term stressful reactions. Participants talk about their actions, thoughts, and reactions to the stressful event. The debriefing is led by the CISM Team. A debriefing is **not** a critique of agency operations and performance issues shall not be discussed.
 - F. **Defusing** - A "mini-debriefing" that is not as detailed, lengthy or structured as a full debriefing, and performed immediately after an incident is over. It allows for peer support, information, and ventilation of feelings. In many cases, defusing may eliminate the need for a debriefing.
 - G. **Demobilization** - Demobilization services are used at large scale, lengthy and highly intense events, such as airplane crashes, long term civil disturbances, natural disasters, etc.
 - H. **Peer to Peer Debriefing** - An individual debriefing and educational session performed at the incident scene, immediately pursuant to a critical incident. The peer to peer debriefing allows for immediate intervention to begin on behalf of the affected personnel. Nothing precludes a peer to peer debriefing in the days following a critical incident should that be necessary.
 - I. **CISM Staff Liaison (HCSO)** – A member of the Sheriff's Office command staff designated to assist the on-scene commander at an incident that requires CISM services. The Staff Liaison will assist by assessing the situation and deploying CISM team members for the purpose of defusing, demobilization, and / or peer to peer intervention with the affected personnel.
- V. **PROCEDURE:**
- A. It shall be the policy of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to initiate CISM when an incident is identified as a critical stress-related incident. Such incidents include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Death or serious injury to a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office deputy or employee.
 - 2. Death or serious injury to a citizen resulting from law enforcement or detention operations.
 - 3. Death or serious injury to an emergency service worker when Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office personnel are involved.
 - 4. Any incident that is charged with profound or overwhelming emotion to deputies and employees involved, such as incidents of extreme danger, incidents involving severe injuries or fatalities, incidents that attract unusually intense media coverage, etc.
 - B. Supervisors perceiving a need for CISM services shall notify the CISM Staff Liaison to request team activation. In the event the Staff Liaison is unavailable, the CISM may be contacted through the Hillsborough County Emergency Dispatch at 813-681-4422.

Any deputy or employee who has difficulty dealing with an incident, or is aware of another such employee, may request CISM services through a supervisor.

- C.** The CISM Team Liaison may arrange a defusing or debriefing, depending on the specific circumstances.
1. If immediate response is needed, the shift/bureau commander shall arrange for the affected employee(s) to meet with the CISM Team.
 2. If a delayed response is sufficient, the CISM Team shall set up a debriefing for the affected employee(s), as soon as practical.
- D.** The scene commander of a major incident shall determine the need for demobilization services. These services can be coordinated for all emergency service workers at the scene.
1. Demobilization services provide for:
 - a. A break or rest area for units in continuing service at the event.
 - b. Information and support as deputies leave the scene, and an opportunity for ventilation of thoughts and reactions.
 - c. A place for command officers to give closing remarks or incident updates.
 2. CISM Team members not needed or engaged in incident activities may handle demobilization services.
 3. CISM Team members shall report to the Staff Liaison or his designee for assignment at an incident scene.
- E.** Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office employees who are CISM Team members and are called for CISM activities while off duty shall be placed in an on duty status.
1. If already on duty, employees shall be permitted to participate in CISM functions, as workload allows.
 2. Due to the area wide responsibilities of the CISM Team, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office CISM Team members may respond as needed to debriefings for other agencies and in other counties.
- F.** CISM sessions shall be held in a location selected to ensure as much privacy as possible. Participants are encouraged to speak freely in an atmosphere of support and mutual respect. Confidentiality shall be maintained.
- Employees exhibiting continued difficulty in resolving reactions to critical incidents shall be referred to the Employee Assistance Program for further assistance.
- G.** Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office employees on the CISM Team shall follow the team's protocols and procedures manual, when performing CISM activities.

Chad Chronister
Sheriff