

# Nebraska Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program Administrative Policies and Procedures

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**Subject: Code of Ethics**

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Effective Date: 04-01-2001

Position(s) Accountable: \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date: 03-20-2008

Approved By: Interagency Management Committee

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## PURPOSE

To provide clarification on the Standards of Conduct as cited in Title 176, NAC, 1-003.02C.

To promote an ethical practice, the Nebraska Statewide CISM Program requires members to adhere to the following Code of Ethics. Violation of these standards of conduct or codes of ethic, which may affect a CISM member's CISM performance, shall be the basis for an investigation and possible disciplinary procedure.

## PROCEDURES

The CISM Program has a responsibility to assure that members are provided a copy of the Ethics Code and applicable training. Program members have an obligation to be familiar with the CISM Ethics Code and its application to CISM program activities.

These Ethical Standards are applicable to the members of the Nebraska Statewide CISM Program whenever those members are assigned to an official CISM activity or intervention.

An activity of a CISM Program member may be reviewed under these Ethical Standards only if the related activity is part of the member's CISM program-related functions. Personal activities having no connection to or effect on the CISM program are not subject to this Ethics Code. Lack of awareness or misunderstanding of an ethical standard is not itself a defense to a charge of unethical conduct.

*Informal Resolution of an Ethics Violation.* When a member believes there may have been an ethical violation by another member, the member attempts to resolve the issue by bringing it to the attention of the other member.

*Reporting Ethical Violations.* If an apparent ethical violation is not resolved informally, members report the alleged violation, in a timely manner. The written complaint shall be directed to the Program Director.

The Program Director or designee shall initiate an investigation. The investigator shall forward the results of the investigation with recommendations to the appropriate Regional Management Committee in no more than 90 days. Any disciplinary action shall be consistent with Title 176, NAC, 1.003.02D, Disciplinary Actions, the Program Director shall notify the involved persons and the Interagency Management Committee of the final determination in writing.

**NEBRASKA CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM) PROGRAM  
ETHICS CODE**

**1. General Standards**

**1.01 Boundaries of Competence.** Members<sup>1</sup> provide services, training and/or conduct research only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience or appropriate professional experience.

**1.02 Maintaining Expertise.** Members undertake ongoing efforts to maintain competence in the skills they are required to use.

**1.03 Respecting Others.** Members shall respect the rights of others whose values, attitudes, and opinions differ from their own. CISM members shall respect all people, regardless of gender, age, disability, racial, ethnic and religious differences and shall not engage in any discrimination or harassment.

**1.04 Sexual Harassment.** Members shall not engage in any sexual solicitations, advances, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that occurs in connection with the members activities or roles as a member and which: (1) either is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile environment and the member knows or is told this; or (2) is sufficiently severe or intense to be abusive to a reasonable person in the context. Sexual harassment can consist of a single intense or severe act; or of multiple, persistent, or pervasive acts.

**1.05 Other Harassment.** Members do not knowingly engage in behavior that is harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact in their program related activities based on factors such as individuals' age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language or socio-economic status.

**1.06 Personal Problems and Conflicts.** Members shall recognize that their personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their effectiveness. Accordingly, they shall refrain from taking on an activity when they suspect, know, or should know, their personal problems are likely to lead to harming another person or the program's reputation.

Members have an obligation to be alert to signs of, and to obtain assistance for, their personal problems at an early stage, in order to prevent significantly impaired performance.

**1.07 Solicitations of Clients.** There are no fees either financial or in-kind for services provided by the Nebraska Statewide Critical Incident Stress Management Program. Members may not solicit clients through their CISM interventions should a responder<sup>2</sup> need additional assistance following an intervention. With the consent of the recipient of services, the member shall arrange for a consultation or referral based on the best interest of the person in need. Members may not use their role as a program member to intentionally benefit through personal or professional financial gain.

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<sup>1</sup> For ease of reading, the terms "CISM Program Member" or "member" refer comprehensively to the Statewide CISM Program Management Committee members, program administrators, support staff, and program members, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>2</sup> The term, "responder" includes law enforcement personnel, firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, hospital personnel, corrections personnel and emergency management personnel.

## 2. Public Statements

**2.01 Definition of Public Statements.** Public statements include, but are not limited to, paid or unpaid advertising, brochures, printed matter, directory listings, personal resumes or curricula vita, interviews or comments for use in media, statements in legal proceedings, lectures in public and oral presentations, and published material.

**2.02 Avoiding False or Deceptive Statements.** Members do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, misleading or fraudulent.

## 3. Privacy and Confidentiality

**3.01 Confidentiality.** Confidentiality is the foundation on which the CISM program rests. CISM principles require that confidentiality and privacy of responders be respected. Confidentiality applies to information received during a debriefing or individual session. Program members have a primary obligation and take responsible precautions to respect the confidentiality rights of those with whom they work.

**3.02 Discussing the Limits of Confidentiality.** Unless it is not foreseeable or is contraindicated, the discussion of confidentiality occurs at the outset of the relationship and thereafter as new circumstances may warrant.

**3.03 Minimizing Intrusion on Privacy.** Members discuss confidential information obtained from program related contacts only for CISM professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with such matters.

**3.04 Maintenance of Records.** Members maintain appropriate confidentiality when creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of records under their control, whether these are written, automated or in any other medium. Program members maintain and dispose of records in accordance with the law in a manner that permits compliance with the requirements of this Ethics Code.

**3.05 Disclosures.** Program members disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual only for a valid purpose, such as (1) to provide needed professional services to an individual, (2) to obtain appropriate professional consultations, or (3) to protect the responder or others from harm.

Program members do not share confidential information which reasonably could lead to the identification of a responder, agency or organization with whom they have had a debriefing relationship unless they (1) obtain the prior consent of the person, agency or organization or (2) the disclosure cannot be avoided. Information is shared only to the extent necessary to achieve the purpose of the consultation.

**3.06 Use of Confidential information for Teaching or Other Purposes.** Program members do not disclose in their writing, lectures or other public media, confidential, personally identifiable information concerning the responders or agencies for whom they have provided a stress management session, unless the person or agency has consented in writing or unless there is an ethical or legal obligation for doing so.

Ordinarily, in scientific and professional presentations, members disguise confidential information concerning persons or organizations so they are not individually identifiable to others and so discussions do not cause harm to persons who might identify themselves.

#### 4. Teaching, Training Supervision, Research and Publishing

**4.01 Education and Training Programs.** Program trainers seek to ensure the programs are competently designed, provide the proper experiences and meet the requirements for certification, continuing education or other goals for which claims are made by the program.

Program trainers will maintain a current and accurate description of the program content, training goals and objectives, and requirements for satisfactory completion of the program. This information must be readily available to all interested parties. CISM trainers will present CISM information accurately and with a reasonable degree of objectivity.

**4.02 Research Responsibility.** Program researchers assure that research is conducted ethically, competently and with due concern for the dignity and welfare of participants.

Whenever possible, there will be an agreement with participants which clarifies the nature of the research and responsibilities of each party.

Program researchers do not fabricate data or falsify results in their reports or publications. Reasonable steps shall be taken to correct errors through a published correction, retraction, erratum or other appropriate publication means.

#### 5. Resolving Ethical Issues

**5.01 Confronting Ethical Issues.** When a program member is uncertain whether a particular situation or course of action would violate this Ethics Code, the member ordinarily consults with other members knowledgeable about ethical issues such as a program administrator or a CISM Regional Clinical Director.

**5.02 Conflicts between Ethics and Organizational Demands.** If a demand of the CISM Program conflicts with the Ethics Code, or the Ethics Code conflicts with the professional association or state ethics codes, members will clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code; and to the extent possible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to the Ethics Code.

**5.03 Cooperating with Ethics Investigations.** Members cooperate with ethics investigations, proceedings and resulting requirements of the statewide CISM program. Failure to cooperate is in and of itself an ethics violation.

**5.04 Improper Complaint.** Program members do not file or encourage the filing of ethic complaints which are frivolous and/or are intended to harm the respondent rather than protect those whom the program serves.