

CHAPTER 6
CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT
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CHAPTER 6
CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

1. PURPOSE.

a. The CHP recognizes the potential for critical incident stress reactions when employees experience traumatic events during the course of performing their job duties. California Highway Patrol employees are regularly exposed to trauma as a result of their commitment to the public they serve. As such, the Department is dedicated to lessening the effects of stress reactions to critical incidents should they occur.

b. The purpose of the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) system is to reduce the effects of post-trauma stress by providing an opportunity for discussion of the employee's emotional and physical reaction(s) to a critical incident. A critical incident is an actual or perceived event, which has the potential to overwhelm a person's physical, mental, or emotional coping strategies. The CISM system has proven to be a successful strategy for mitigating adverse effects of trauma and accelerating recovery from the stress associated with an event.

c. Components of the CISM system can be, but not limited to:

- (1) Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD).
- (2) Crisis Management Briefing (CMB).
- (3) One-On-One Counseling Session.

2. POLICY.

a. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

(1) A CISD is a multistep process to promote emotional resiliency and recovery for employees who have been exposed to a high-level stress or traumatic event.

(2) The CISD services are provided by licensed mental health professionals through the state's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) contract provider.

(3) A CISD should be scheduled within 24-72 hours post event or as soon as possible thereafter.

(4) A CISD is not intended to be a tactical critique and no documentation shall be kept by any party.

(5) An employee's attendance during a CISD session is voluntary. During such circumstances, individuals directly involved in the traumatic event should be encouraged to attend while being informed there is no requirement they participate during the session(s). If an individual has reservations about attending a group CISD, an individual session (one-on-one counseling session) may be conducted between that individual and the mental health professional.

(6) With the approval of the appropriate Commissioner, the immediate commander may assign the involved employee a suitable amount of administrative time off if the appointed debriefing counselor recommends the employee should not return to work for the specific period of time, or if, in the opinion of the immediate commander, administrative time off for the employee would be reasonable and prudent.

b. Crisis Management Briefing.

(1) The CMB is not intended to be a tactical critique or a CISD, but more of an informal meeting relating general information regarding the incident. At the commander's discretion, a CMB can be arranged in a setting of choice and can be attended by both those directly and indirectly involved.

(2) The CMB services can be provided by licensed mental health professionals through the Office of Employee Safety and Assistance (OESA), if desired. A CMB can be presented by the appropriate Division Chief, commander, or designee to address the Area or local community.

(3) A CMB should be scheduled as soon as practical.

c. One-On-One Counseling Session.

(1) A one-on-one counseling session is typically a private session involving an individual employee and a licensed mental health professional following a critical incident.

(2) The one-on-one counseling session service is provided by a licensed mental health professional through the OESA.

(3) A one-on-one counseling session can be obtained for any critical incident and is available to all departmental employees.

3. SHOOTING INCIDENTS.

a. The Department further recognizes the potential for critical incident stress reactions to exist in uniformed employees who, in the performance of their duties:

(1) Discharge a firearm at a person, whether or not injury or death occurs.

(2) Are the target of an assailant's discharged firearm, whether or not injury occurs.

b. Commanders or their designee shall refer uniformed employees who have been involved in incidents of this nature to a CISD and/or a one-on-one counseling session. A CISD can be, but is not limited to, a one-on-one counseling session involving a uniformed employee and a licensed mental health professional or a group session including the involved employees from the incident and a licensed mental health professional.

c. Commanders or their designee should arrange for a CISD session(s) for other employees as deemed appropriate (e.g., partner officer not involved in the shooting, involved communications personnel, other area employees).

d. When the employee has been injured during the incident or is hospitalized, the commander will consult with the attending physician prior to referring the employee for debriefing.

4. OTHER INCIDENTS.

a. The Department also recognizes the potential for critical incident stress reactions to exist in employees who experience other incidents including, but not limited to:

(1) Line of duty death.

(2) Suicide of employee.

(3) In-custody death.

(4) Natural disasters (e.g., flood, fire, or earthquake).

(5) School shootings.

5. OBTAINING SERVICES.

a. A commander or a designee may request a mental health professional or any CISM services by contacting the OESA.

(1) The OESA can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the dedicated employee assistance line at (916) 843-3320.

b. When CISM services are requested, the OESA will contact Peer Support Program (PSP) volunteers to assist with setup of the services. The OESA will coordinate with the commander or the designee regarding the details of the services.

c. The OESA will choose one of the therapists previously vetted by the CHP to conduct CISM services for the Department. Commanders may request a specific mental health professional if one is known to be available through the state's EAP contract provider.

d. At the discretion of the commander or their designee, individuals not employed by the CHP, but involved in the event (e.g., allied agencies, and other first responders), may attend a group CISD or CMB.

e. If requested, immediate family members may also be invited to a separate special group session but shall not attend general CISDs.

f. When the employee has been injured during an incident or is hospitalized, the commander should consult with the attending physician prior to scheduling the employee for a debriefing. If the attending physician has made prior arrangements for counseling the injured or hospitalized employee, or has raised concerns that should be considered, the commander will discuss further action with the OESA and the Injury and Illness Case Management Unit for the coordination of worker's compensation benefits.

g. If desired, the employee may arrange for a debriefing session with a licensed clinician of choice who is not under contract with the contract provider. Unless liability for the expense has been accepted by the State Compensation Insurance Fund, any costs will be the responsibility of the employee.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE.

a. The OESA commander shall be responsible for approving all contract provider billing statements associated with any CISM services.

- b. The OESA commander or their designee may attend CISM services when deemed appropriate.
- c. The OESA should send a representative to each Division annually, to ensure:
 - (1) The CISM services are being conducted according to departmental policy.
 - (2) The CISM services are effectively being disseminated to Department employees.
 - (3) The CISM services are appropriately conducted by the licensed mental health professionals.
 - (4) The PSP volunteers are providing proper assistance during any of the CISM services.

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