



*Kern County Sheriff's Office*

**Policies and Procedures**

<b>TITLE:</b> CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM) TEAM		<b>NO:</b> J-400	
<b>APPROVED:</b> Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
<b>EFFECTIVE:</b> August 1, 1990	<b>REVIEWED:</b> 06/01/2018	<b>REVISED:</b> 04/20/2005	<b>UPDATED:</b> 06/01/2018

**POLICY**

The purpose of this program is to provide all employees, volunteers and their families with the opportunity for peer support through times of personal or professional crisis or stress, and to provide a resource in handling crisis situations in the field that require intervention.

The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team processes may be defined as individual or group meetings (defusing), or discussions about a traumatic event, or series of traumatic events (debriefing).

The defusing and debriefing processes are designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event on first responders, prevent the subsequent development of a post-traumatic syndrome, and serve as an early identification mechanism for individuals who will require professional mental health follow-up subsequent to a traumatic event.

**The CISM TEAM** is in actuality a partnership between mental health professionals, Sheriff's Office employees and volunteers who are interested in preventing and mitigating the negative impact of acute stress on themselves, their peers and their families.

**CISM Team members** are peers from the ranks of sworn, non-sworn and volunteer personnel within all divisions of the Sheriff's Office, who are specially trained to recognize the presence of acute and chronic stress in their peers and to respond appropriately.

**CISM Team activities shall consist of:**

- Interventions
- Defusings
- Debriefings
- Demobilization

**Team members shall:**

- Attend, as a minimum, an International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (ICISF) approved, two-day CISM Basic Courts.
- Attend at least one CISM continuing education or refresher session per year (if not directly involved in providing services at two incidents where they applied their CISM skills).

- Abide by the principles of confidentiality and keep all CISM interventions confidential.
- Provide defusing and debriefing operations and be sensitive to the psychological needs of their peers.

**Mental health professionals who serve on the teams shall:**

- Have at least a Master’s degree in psychology, social work, psychiatric nursing, or mental health counseling.
- Be specially trained in crisis intervention, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, and the critical incident stress debriefing process.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Critical Incident:** Any event that has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or group. Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events which are outside the range of ordinary human experiences.

**Critical Incident Stress:** Any situations faced by Emergency Services Personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability at the scene or later generates unusually strong feelings in the emergency services worker. *Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell*

**Defusing**

A brief confidential discussion between person(s) involved in a critical incident and CISM Team members IMMEDIATELY following an incident. The purpose of a defusing is to restore the person’s cognitive functioning and to prepare him/her for future stress reactions from the incident.

**Debriefing**

A closed, confidential discussion about a distressing critical incident, which is designed to mitigate the impact of a critical incident and to assist the personnel in recovering as quickly as possible from the stress associated with the event.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The executive board, with the concurrence of the Sheriff-Coroner, will set the policy, protocol and procedural guidelines for all aspects of the program;

The executive board will consist of the following:

The executive board is chaired by the program coordinator, appointed by the Sheriff-Coroner, and one member who is a Mental Health professional (Sheriff’s Office Psychologist).

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## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The program coordinator will appoint CISM team members, with the approval of the Sheriff-Coroner, to act as the executive committee. The executive committee will be composed of no less than three CISM team members, including the program coordinator, and will be composed of as many persons as are deemed needed to accomplish the work of the executive board.

All members of the executive committee shall meet the CISM team selection criteria and have received at least the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (ICISF) approved, two-day CISM Basic Course.

## **COMMITTEE AT LARGE**

The Committee at large will consist of the executive board and all currently active CISM team members.

## **THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SHALL:**

- Maintain and coordinate liaison between CISM team members and the Sheriff's Office Administration;
- Maintain or cause to be maintained all statistics and evaluations of the program, and submit an annual report to the Sheriff-Coroner on the work of the program, and its needs;
- Coordinate recruitment, screening, selection, training retention, and dismissal of CISM team members;
- Cause to be maintained a current catalogue of referral resources for assistance, and make it available for reference of all CISM team members, employees and their families;
- Cause to be maintained an accounting of time spent and number of contacts by CISM team members for statistical purposes. This data shall be kept by each CISM team member and submitted monthly to the executive board. It shall include resources expended, time, equipment, etceteras, and the number of contacts and problems dealt with (CISM participants will not be identified in any reports).
- Keep CISM team members apprised of program activities, suggested reading material, upcoming seminars, referral resources, and training classes.
- The executive committee, including all CISM team members, will meet at least every other month for training and discussion, to do the work required by the program and sharpen CISM skills and CISM effectiveness.

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## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

To be effective, the CISM program must maintain confidentiality. For this reason, one of the most important responsibilities of a CISM team member is to maintain the anonymity of CISM participants and the confidentiality of any conversations within a peer support setting. Therefore, communications between a CISM team member and the peer requesting help is considered privileged communications and cannot be divulged under any circumstance with the following exceptions:

- Suspected child abuse
- Danger to self
- Danger to others
- Narcotics offenses (sales or transportation)
- Domestic violence
- Elderly abuse
- Cases where law requires divulgence
- Divulgence is requested by the peer

### **DIRECTIVE A**

In the event of any of the above exceptions to the confidentiality rule, the CISM team member shall immediately notify the CISM program coordinator. If the coordinator, upon review of the circumstances concurs, the situation will be brought to the attention of the concerned Chief Deputy. The CISM team member's role in these cases will be to continue emotional support of the peer without interfering with the necessary Sheriff's Office action.

### **DIRECTIVE B**

With the exception of the situations outlined above, all other communications between the CISM team member and the peer requesting help and privileged may not be divulged by the CISM team member or peer without the expressed permission of the other.

No CISM team member may be compelled to give any statement in any Internal Affairs investigation, nor be compelled to testify in any Civil Service hearing.

A CISM team member may not be subjected to discipline by the Sheriff's Office for refusing to divulge communications deemed privileged by these sections of the Sheriff's Office procedure manual.

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