



Virginia Department of Corrections

Emergency Management

Operating Procedure 075.7

Critical Incident Peer Support Team

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REVIEW

The Content Owner will review this operating procedure annually and re-write it no later than three years after the effective date.

COMPLIANCE

This operating procedure applies to all units operated by the Virginia Department of Corrections. Practices and procedures must comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, ACA standards, PREA standards, and DOC directives and operating procedures.

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DEFINITIONS

Critical Incident - Any incident, action, or event outside the range of usual work experience that may cause a significant emotional reaction in staff.

Critical Incident Debriefing - An individual or group meeting designed to reduce the probability that staff involved in a serious incident will experience long-term consequences of traumatic stress.

Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Team - A statewide network of volunteers comprised of DOC staff specially trained in critical incident stress management strategies and methodology in order to provide confidential assistance to staff members who have experienced a critical incident.

- **CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator** - The Regional Operations Chief will serve as the assistant CIPS Team Coordinator for the performance of all duties associated with management of the regional CIPS Team to include oversight of the recruitment, appointment, organization, maintenance, training, and removal of team members as well as monitoring and tracking of CIPS training and operational activities of their regional CIPS Team.
- **CIPS Assistant Team Leader** - A CIPS Team member designated by the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator to assist the team leader with their duties and responsibilities; this individual will be responsible for maintaining a current recall roster of all CIPS Team members and notifying the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator of any changes.
- **CIPS Team Coordinator** - The Major of Extradition, Fugitive, & Emergency Services Unit will serve as the CIPS Team Coordinator whose responsibilities include the establishment of minimum training guidelines, schedule required trainings and meetings, and maintain records on CIPS Teams' activations and activities statewide.
- **CIPS Team Leader** - A team member designated by the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator to assist with the recruitment, appointment, organization, maintenance, training, and removal of team members as well as the coordination of CIPS training and operational activities of their regional CIPS Team.
- **CIPS Team Members** - Teams will include Peer Supporters from a range of disciplines who received special training to recognize stress-related symptoms. Peer supporters are often the initial on-scene contact to provide basic support to a staff member involved in a critical incident. Psychology Associates trained in trauma informed care or crisis management may serve as trainers or consultants but are not eligible to serve as peer supporters.

Critical Incident Stress - Emotional, psychological, or physical consequences following a critical incident, action, or event; the degree of life threat experienced during the incident, the speed of onset of the incident and its duration, the loss of significant others, and the potential for reoccurrence impact the extent and severity to which these consequences occur.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) - Programs and strategies designed to mitigate the effects of critical incidents in staff on the scene and staff responding to the incident and to assist them in managing and recovering from significant critical incident stress.

Group Response Intervention Team (GRIT) - A select group of DOC Psychology Associates who have been trained specifically to assist staff who experienced a serious work-related incident; the primary goal is to help staff members cope with the experience as effectively as possible through a formal group debriefing process.

Organizational Unit Head - The person occupying the highest position in a DOC unit, such as a correctional facility, regional office, probation and parole office, Virginia Correctional Enterprises, Academy for Staff Development, Corrections Construction Unit, Agribusiness Unit, and individual headquarters unit e.g., Human Resources, Offender Management, Internal Audit.

Psychology Associate - An individual with at least a Master's degree in psychology, social work, or relevant human services field with knowledge, training, and skills in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, which may include a Psychiatric Provider, Social Worker, or Registered Nurse.



PURPOSE

This operating procedure defines the structure and utilization of the Department of Corrections (DOC) Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Team established to minimize the effects caused by critical incidents on staff and to assist staff members to cope effectively with their reactions to these incidents in order to maintain a healthy and effective workforce.

PROCEDURE

- I. Mission of the Critical Incident Peer Support Team
 - A. The primary mission of the Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) team is to help staff either directly or indirectly involved in a critical incident cope as effectively as possible with their reactions to the incident in a healthy and positive manner by providing on-scene peer support services and follow-up support services during the staff member's readjustment period.
 - B. Staff issues, such as lay-offs, facility closing, death of a family member, unless the family member is also staff, etc. should be referred to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or to other internal departments; see Operating Procedure 150.5, *Employee Wellness*.
 - C. Staff who fear retaliation for reporting or cooperating with investigations into sexual abuse or sexual harassment and are in need of or request emotional support services should be referred to the EAP. (§115.67[b], §115.267[b])
- II. CIPS Team Activation and Response
 - A. The Organizational Unit Head may request the CIPS Team respond to help staff members impacted by a critical incident that includes, but is not be limited to the following incidents:
 1. Line of duty death
 2. Death of a staff member
 3. Serious line of duty injury or assault on a staff member
 4. Suicide of a staff member
 5. Hostage situation
 6. Manmade or natural disasters
 7. Threat situations (bomb, terrorist, active shooter), riots, and disturbances
 - B. CIPS Team activation is mandatory for the following critical incidents:
 1. Line of duty death or serious injury or other unnatural death of a staff member
 2. Any manmade or natural disasters, threat situations (bomb, terrorist, active shooter), riots, and disturbances to which staff respond
 - C. CIPS Team Activation
 1. Each CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator may establish a region specific process to govern the request for and activation of the CIPS Team for their region.
 2. Any staff member who becomes aware of a critical incident is encouraged to notify a supervisor. Supervisors, upon learning that a staff member has been involved in a critical incident, will immediately inform the Organizational Unit Head who will notify and consult with the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator or designee to assess the need for:
 - a. On-scene support services
 - b. Demobilization
 - c. Defusing



- d. Debriefing
 - e. Individual consultation
3. When the Organizational Unit Head requests and the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator/designee approves the activation of the CIPS Team for a critical incident or the incident requires mandatory activation, the CIPS Team Leader or CIPS Assistant Team Leader for the affected region will activate the CIPS team and deploy team members.
- a. When requesting CIPS Team activation, the Organizational Unit Head or designee must provide the CIPS Team Leader with the following information:
 - i. Time and location of the incident
 - ii. Nature of the incident
 - iii. Services requested, i.e., On-scene Support, Demobilization, Defusing, Debriefing, Individual Consultation, etc.
 - iv. The number of staff members directly or indirectly involved
 - v. Contact information for staff physically injured
 - vi. Current status of the incident
 - b. The CIPS Team Leader will determine the team members assigned to respond to and/or provide services to the staff members involved in the critical incident. Team members should not routinely be used to respond and/or provide services when they are on call for their regular job duties.
 - c. When a CIPS Team member is assigned to respond, the only information that will be released to the team member's supervisor is notification of the staff members required participation.
 - d. The CIPS Team Leader may request additional CIPS Team members from other regions as needed.
 - e. The CIPS Team Leader will complete the *CIPS Team Activation 075_F12* and forward a copy to CIPS Team Coordinator and the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator.
4. The Organizational Unit Head or designee will:
- a. Ensure staff are aware of the date, time, and location where services will be provided and their eligibility to participate
 - b. Coordinate the provision of services with the CIPS Team Leader for their unit
 - c. Ensure that physical and logistical requirements have been finalized
 - d. Provide CIPS Team members with all information related to the incident, including but not limited to:
 - i. Pictures
 - ii. Diagrams
 - iii. Incident Reports
 - iv. Audio/Video Tapes
 - v. Newspaper Articles

III. Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Team Organization and Responsibilities

- A. The CIPS Team is comprised of the CIPS Team Coordinator, CIPS Assistant Team Coordinators, CIPS Team Leaders, CIPS Assistant Team Leaders, and CIPS Team Members.
 - 1. The CIPS Team is divided by region and each regional team consists of an Assistant Team Coordinator, Team Leader, Assistant Team Leader, and a minimum of seven staff members who voluntarily serve as peer supporters in their region.
 - 2. Each CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator will designate the Team Leader and Assistant Team Leader for their region.
- B. CIPS Team Coordinator Responsibilities
 - 1. Establish training curriculum and minimum training requirements such as annual in-service and



quarterly team meetings.

2. Coordinate Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training for CIPS Team members, Peer Supporters.
3. Maintain records on CIPS Teams' activations and the activities in all regions and review the annual report submitted by each region on the utilization of CIPS Team services provided under the CISM program.

C. CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator Responsibilities

1. Oversee the recruitment, appointment, and removal process of CIPS Team members.
2. Ensure the Team Leaders' contact information and a current recall roster of all CIPS Team members is disseminated to all DOC units and the CIPS Team Coordinator.
3. Maintain records on CIPS Teams' activations and activities for the region and prepare an annual report on the utilization of the CIPS Team services provided under the CISM program for review by the CIPS Team Coordinator and submission to the Chief of Corrections Operations.
4. Ensure CIPS Team members do not interfere with any on-going criminal or administrative investigations.

D. Team Leaders and Assistant Team Leader Responsibilities

1. Recruit CIPS Team members and coordinate with CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator on the appointment and removal of team members.
2. Maintain a current recall roster of all CIPS Team members and notify the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator of any changes.
3. Coordinate CIPS Team activities while keeping the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator informed.
4. Activate the CIPS Team and respond or designate members of the CIPS Team to respond and document CIPS activations on the *CIPS Team Activation 075_F12*.
5. Track CIPS Teams' activations and activities for the region and when necessary, coordinate follow-up services.
6. Ensure CIPS Team members are notified and attend required CISM training and quarterly meetings.

E. Responsibilities of CIPS Team members

1. Respond to incidents within or outside their respective region as directed by the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator or their regional Team Leader.
2. Provide follow-up services to staff members who need or want additional support.
3. Ensure all information received during the debriefing, defusing, demobilization, and individual consultation remains confidential and is only shared in accordance with this operating procedure.
4. Document notification, services provided, and any disclosure of confidential information on the *CIPS Team Member Response Report 075_F13*.
5. Attend required CISM training and quarterly team meetings.

IV. Application and Selection Criteria for CIPS Team Members

- #### A. Staff who wish to apply must submit their request to serve as a voluntary member of the CIPS Team in writing to the Organizational Unit Head. Headquarters staff who wish to apply must submit their request to serve as a CIPS Team member in writing to their Unit Head through the Central Region.
1. The Unit Head will review the request and will submit the staff member's application through the CIPS Team Leader to the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator .
 2. A panel consisting of the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator, CIPS Team Leader, and one other CIPS



Team member will select new CIPS Team members.

B. Criteria for Candidate Review and Selection

1. Candidates should possess at least three years of experience as a DOC staff member.
2. Candidates should possess a clear understanding of the program purpose, objectives, and guidelines.
3. Candidates must have a positive reputation among their peers and supervisors and be well adjusted in both their personal and professional environments.
4. Candidates should have a sincere desire to assist their fellow staff and be willing to respect and maintain confidentiality.
5. Candidates must be willing to respond to:
 - a. Emergency callouts
 - b. Scheduled training
 - c. Requests for unforeseen services as directed by the CIPS Team Coordinator or CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator

V. Critical Incident Stress Management Program

A. The main Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) strategies utilized to mitigate the effects of critical incidents on staff and to assist staff members in managing and recovering from significant critical incident stress include:

1. **Defusing:** A small group process which is instituted after any traumatic incident, action, or event powerful enough to overwhelm the coping mechanisms of the staff member who was exposed to it.
2. **Demobilization:** A brief intervention immediately after a disaster or major incident which provides a transition period from the major incident back to the normal work routine.
3. **Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS):** A training and counseling seminar for staff who have previously been involved in a critical incident.
4. **On-Scene Support Services:** Support services provided at the scene of a critical or traumatic event or incident.
5. **Critical Incident Briefing:** A briefing conducted in an open forum where there is little or no control over who is in attendance.
 - a. An overview of the event is provided, followed by instruction on stress and positive coping methods.
 - b. Staff in attendance may be offered the opportunity to ask questions, but discussion is not facilitated or encouraged by CIPS Team members.
 - c. A Public Information Officer or other ranking staff member authorized to speak publicly about the incident should provide the facts of the incident.
6. **Critical Incident Debriefing:** An individual or group meeting or discussion usually held 24 to 72 hours after an incident targeted toward mitigating psychological distress associated with a critical incident or traumatic event.
7. **Special Event Support:** In the case of a line of duty death or other tragedy, members may be asked to provide CIPS Team services to staff members attending a funeral, viewing, memorial, or other service.

B. Staff involved in a critical incident are encouraged to participate in the services provided under the CISM Program, but staff member participation is voluntary.

VI. Provision of Services

A. All information shared during debriefing, defusing, demobilization, and individual consultation conducted by CIPS Team members providing services is confidential except for information that involves



danger to the staff member or others and matters of a criminal nature.

1. Information concerning violations of operating procedure and possible criminal activity will be shared as appropriate to include notification to the Special Investigations Unit; see Operating Procedure 030.4, *Special Investigations Unit*.
2. Each CIPS Team member will complete a *CIPS Team Member Response Report 075_F13* to document their notification, the services provided to the staff member, and when necessary, the disclosure of confidential information; the *CIPS Team Member Response Report 075_F13* must be submitted to the CIPS Team Leader or Assistant Team Leader within two working days.
3. CIPS Team members will not make or maintain any notes, recordings, or other records of information exposed during CIPS activities other than the *CIPS Team Activation 075_F12* and the *CIPS Team Member Response Report 075_F13*.

B. On-scene Support

1. The deployed CIPS Team member(s) will respond to the critical incident scene as directed by the CIPS Team Leader. Depending on the dynamics of the incident, there may be multiple scenes where staff may be located following an incident.
2. CIPS Team members, upon arrival, will inform on-scene supervisors of their arrival.
 - a. The responding teams' first responsibility is to provide support for the affected staff.
 - b. For major incidents, every effort will be made to provide multiple team members for each identified scene so that support of supervisors, as described above, can be accomplished.
3. Contact will be made with the affected staff members to:
 - a. Assess the staff member's emotional need
 - b. Support self-esteem and self-reliance
 - c. Offer team services, as appropriate
 - d. Activate the affected staff member's social support network

C. Defusing, Demobilization, and Debriefing

1. The deployed CIPS Team members(s) will respond to a predetermined location for the prescribed event at the direction of the CIPS Team Leader.
2. Support of a trained Psychology Associate is required for a formal debriefing session.

D. The Group Response Intervention Team (GRIT) is available to respond to, and provide support for staff member directly or indirectly involved in a serious work-related incident when the CIPS Team Coordinator or CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator has requested a formal debriefing as a supplement to other services already provided; see Operating Procedure 075.8, *Group Response Intervention Team*.

E. Follow-up services

1. The CIPS Team will remain available to the staff member for follow-up services during the readjustment period.
2. Follow-up services will be provided to ensure all staff who need or want additional support are given support from the team.
3. Follow-up services will be provided to staff members who participated in the defusing, demobilization, or debriefing immediately after the initial session is complete.
4. Additional follow-up services, if requested, include but are not limited to:
 - a. Work location visit
 - b. Telephone call
 - c. Individual consultation



- d. Referral to the EAP
 - e. Additional group meeting
5. Follow-up services may be initiated by:
- a. A participant through a telephone call or personal appearance
 - b. A supervisor request that a team member check on a participant
 - c. A CIPS Team member
 - d. The Organizational Unit Head
 - e. The CIPS Team Coordinator or Assistant Team Coordinator for the purpose of quality assurance
6. CIPS Team members will maintain continued contact with their CIPS Team Leader or Assistant Team Leader.

VII. Operational Considerations

- A. CIPS Team members will not interfere with any on-going criminal or administrative investigations. Noncompliance with this requirement may result in referral for disciplinary action under Operating Procedure 135.1, *Standards of Conduct*.
- B. This operating procedure does not interfere with the voluntary use of or referral to any other related programs or services.
- C. Responding CIPS Team members will be considered on duty and on special assignment.
1. If DOC vehicles are not available, team members are eligible for travel reimbursement in accordance with Operating Procedure 240.1, *Travel*.
 2. CIPS Team members will be compensated in accordance with Operating Procedure 110.2, *Overtime and Schedule Adjustments*.
- D. The CIPS Team Leaders, Assistant Team Leaders, and all CIPS Team members will serve at the pleasure of the CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator and may be removed from their positions at any time without cause or warning.
- E. A CIPS Team member may be removed from the team at any time following formal disciplinary action or for engaging in conduct that might be deemed detrimental to the DOC or the credibility of the program.

REFERENCES

- [Operating Procedure 030.4, *Special Investigations Unit*](#)
- [Operating Procedure 075.8, *Group Response Intervention Team*](#)
- [Operating Procedure 110.2, *Overtime and Schedule Adjustments*](#)
- [Operating Procedure 135.1, *Standards of Conduct*](#)
- [Operating Procedure 150.5, *Employee Wellness*](#)
- [Operating Procedure 240.1, *Travel*](#)

ATTACHMENTS

None

FORM CITATIONS

- [CIPS Team Activation 075_F12](#)
- [CIPS Team Member Response Report 075_F13](#)

