



# Operating Procedure

<b>Effective Date</b> January 1, 2017 <b>Amended</b>	<b>Number</b> 145.5
	<b>Operating Level</b> Department
<b>Supersedes</b> Operating Procedure 075.5 (3/1/15)	
<b>Authority</b> COV §53.1-10; §54.1-3601	
<b>ACA/PREA Standards</b> §115.67[b], §115.267[b]	
<b>Office of Primary Responsibility</b> Human Resources Director	

## Subject

### CRITICAL INCIDENT PEER SUPPORT TEAM

**Incarcerated Offender Access**  
Yes ☐ No ☒

**Public Access** Yes ☒ No ☐  
**Attachments** Yes ☐ No ☒

## I. PURPOSE

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

## II. COMPLIANCE

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

## III. DEFINITIONS

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

**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 employees who are specially trained in critical incident stress management strategies and methodology in order to provide confidential assistance to employees who have experienced a critical incident.

- **CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator** - The Training Director shall serve as the assistant CIPS Team Coordinator for the performance of all duties associated with management of the CIPS Team.
- **CIPS Assistant Team Leader** - A CIPS team member designated to assist the team leader with their duties and responsibilities; this individual shall be responsible for maintaining a current recall roster of all CIPS team members, and notifying the CIPS Team Coordinator of any changes.
- **CIPS Team Coordinator** - The Human Resources Director shall serve as the CIPS Team Coordinator whose responsibilities include the recruitment, appointment, organization, maintenance, training, and removal of team members. The coordinator shall establish minimum training guidelines, schedule required trainings and meetings and maintain CIPS team records and documentation.
- **CIPS Team Leader** - A team member designated to assist with the coordination of CIPS training and operational activities of their regional CIPS team
- **CIPS Team Members** - 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. QMHP's 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 employees on the scene or employees responding to the incident and to assist them in managing and recovering from significant critical incident stress

**Organizational Unit Head** - The person occupying the highest position in a DOC operating unit, such as a correctional facility, regional office, probation and parole office, Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE), Academy for Staff Development, Corrections Construction Unit, Agribusiness Unit, or other separate operational unit.

**Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP)** - An individual employed in a designated mental health services position as a Psychologist or Psychology Associate, Psychiatrist, Social Worker (Masters level) or Registered Nurse, or 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.

#### IV. PROCEDURE

##### A. Mission of the Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Team

1. The CIPS team responds to, and provides support for employees either directly or indirectly involved in a critical incident. Other issues, such as lay-off (facility closing), death of a non-employee family member, etc. are better addressed by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other internal departments.
2. The primary mission of the CIPS team is to help involved employees cope as effectively as possible with their reactions to an incident in a healthy and positive manner by providing on-scene peer support services and follow up support services during the employee's readjustment period.

##### B. Organization and Responsibilities of the Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Team

1. The state wide CIPS team will consist of a CIPS Team Coordinator, CIPS Assistant Team Coordinator, three CIPS Team Leaders, three CIPS Assistant Team Leaders, and CIPS Team Members to serve as peer supporters.
  - a. The statewide CIPS team will be divided by regions, CIPS team members at Headquarters will be assigned to the Central Region CIPS team.
  - b. Each regional team will consist of a team leader, an assistant team leader, and a minimum of seven employees who voluntarily serve as peer supporters in their region.
  - c. The Regional Operations Chief, in consultation with the CIPS Coordinator, will assign a team leader and assistant team leader for each region.
2. Responsibilities of the CIPS Team Coordinator
  - a. Develop and implement training standards and minimum training requirements to include an annual in-service and quarterly team meetings
  - b. Make available CIPS team member instructors to provide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training to DOC employees as requested to include the Academy, all levels of in-service, and supervisor development courses.
  - c. Ensure the team leaders' contact information and current rosters are disseminated to all DOC units
  - d. Conduct an annual review of the program and forward a report to the Chief of Corrections Operations.
3. The team leaders and assistant team leaders shall respond or designate members of the team to respond and coordinate CIPS team activities while keeping the CIPS coordinator informed.
4. CIPS team members will respond to incidents within or outside their respective region as directed by the CIPS coordinator or their regional team leader.

### C. Selection Criteria for CIPS Team Members

1. Assignment as a CIPS team member to be a peer supporter with the CISM Program shall be strictly voluntary.
2. Employee requests to serve as a CIPS team member must be made in writing to the Organizational Unit Head and submitted through the Regional Operations Chief to the CIPS coordinator.
3. Requests from employees at Headquarters to serve as a CIPS team member must be made in writing to their Unit Head and submitted through the Regional Operations Chief to the CIPS Coordinator.
4. CIPS team members will be selected by a panel consisting of the CIPS Team Coordinator, CIPS Team Leader, and one other CIPS team member.
5. Candidates should possess at least three years of experience as a DOC employee.
6. Candidates should possess a clear understanding of the program purpose, objectives, and guidelines.
7. Candidates must have a positive reputation among their peers and supervisors and be well adjusted in both their personal and professional environments.
8. Candidates should have a sincere desire to assist their fellow employees and be willing to respect and maintain confidentiality.
9. Candidates must be willing to respond to:
  - a. Emergency callouts
  - b. Scheduled training
  - c. Requests for unforeseen services as directed by the CIPS Coordinator or their designee
  - d. Emotional support services for staff who fear retaliation for reporting or cooperating with investigations into sexual abuse or sexual harassment. (§115.67[b], §115.267[b])

### D. Critical Incident Stress Management Program

1. The main Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) strategies utilized to mitigate the effects of critical incidents on employees and assist them in managing and recovering from significant critical incident stress include:
  - a. Defusing: A small group process which is instituted after any traumatic incident, action, or event powerful enough to overwhelm the coping mechanisms of the employee exposed to it.
  - b. 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.
  - c. Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS): A training and counseling seminar for employee who have previously been involved in a critical incident
  - d. On-Scene Support Services: Support services provided at the scene of a critical or traumatic event or incident.
  - e. Critical Incident Briefing: A briefing conducted in an open forum where there is little or no control over who is in attendance. An overview of the event is provided, followed by instruction on stress and positive coping methods. An opportunity for those in attendance to ask questions may be offered, but discussion is not facilitated or encouraged by CIPS team members. The facts of the incident should be provided by a public information officer or other ranking employee who is authorized to speak publicly about the incident.
  - f. Critical Incident Debriefing: An individual or group meeting or discussion usually held 24 to 72 hours after an incident and is targeted toward mitigating psychological distress associated with a critical incident or traumatic event.
  - g. 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 attending a funeral, viewing, memorial, or other service.
2. All information shared during debriefing, defusing, demobilization, and individual consultation

conducted by CIPS team members is confidential, except information which involves danger to the employee or others and matters of a criminal nature. Information concerning violations of DOC operating procedures and possible criminal activity will be shared as appropriate to include notification to the Special Investigations Unit in accordance with Operating Procedure 030.4, *Special Investigations Unit*.

3. The CIPS coordinator is responsible for coordinating peer support intervention after critical incidents and will ensure that the sharing of any information will not jeopardize any criminal or administrative investigation.
4. A trauma or specially trained QMHP can provide consultation and support to CIPS team members and may be asked to run a formal debriefing. The QMHP may also provide brief consultation to individuals who have been identified as needing additional support services and may at their discretion recommend referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

#### E. Types of Critical Incidents

1. The CIPS team may be requested to respond to employees who are impacted by a qualifying critical incident. Such incidents include, but may not be limited to:
  - a. Line of duty death
  - b. Death of an employee
  - c. Serious line of duty injury or assault on staff
  - d. Suicide of staff
  - e. Hostage situation
  - f. Manmade or natural disasters, threat situations (bomb, terrorist, active shooter) riots, and disturbances
  - g. Serious motor vehicle crashes while operating a DOC vehicle
  - h. Employees who are a victim of violent criminal incidents involving themselves or their families
2. CIPS team activation is mandatory for the following critical incidents:
  - a. Line of duty death or serious injury or other unnatural death of an employee
  - b. Any manmade or natural disasters, threat situations (bomb, terrorist, active shooter), riots, and disturbances to which employees respond
3. Employees involved in a critical incident are encouraged to participate in the CISM Program, but participation is voluntary. Any employee who becomes aware of a critical incident is encouraged to notify a supervisor.
4. CIPS Team Activation
  - a. Any supervisor upon learning that an employee has been involved in a critical incident shall immediately inform the Organizational Unit Head who will notify and consult with the Regional Operations Chief and/or Regional Administrator to assess the need for:
    - i. On-scene support services
    - ii. Demobilization
    - iii. Defusing
    - iv. Debriefing
    - v. Individual consultation
  - b. Each Regional Operations Chief is permitted to establish a unique procedure governing the request for and activation of the CIPS Team for their Region.
  - c. The selection of team members assigned to provide services will be made by the CIPS team leader for the affected region. Team members should not routinely be used when they are on call.
  - d. Requests for CIPS activation will be directed to the CIPS team leader who must be provided with information on the nature of the incident, the employees involved, the time and location of the

incident, and the current status of the incident.

- e. On direction from the Regional Operations Chief or designee, the CIPS team leader or designee shall activate the CIPS team and deploy team members when a mandatory event occurs or when requested by an Organizational Unit Head or designee. The CIPS team leader may request additional CIPS team members from other regions as needed.
- f. The CIPS team leader will use the [CIPS Team Activation](#) 145\_F9 to report team activation to the CIPS coordinator who is responsible for tracking the CIPS teams' activations and activities for each region.
- g. The Organizational Unit Head or designee shall:
  - i. Ensure employees are aware of the date, time, and location of the session and their eligibility to participate
  - ii. Coordinate the session with their region and the CIPS team leader
  - iii. Ensure that physical and logistical requirements have been finalized
  - iv. Provide CISM team members with all information related to the incident, including but not limited to:
    - (a) Pictures
    - (b) Diagrams
    - (c) Incident Reports
    - (d) Audio/ Video tapes
    - (e) Newspaper Articles

#### F. Provision of Services

1. CIPS services will be confidential. With the exception of information which involves danger to the employee or others and matters of a criminal nature, the only information released will pertain to the notification of the employee's supervisor regarding the employee's required participation.
2. On-scene Support
  - a. 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 employees may be located following an incident.
  - b. Upon arrival, CIPS team members will inform on-scene supervisors of their arrival.
    - i. Responding teams' first responsibility is to provide support for the affected employees.
    - ii. 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.
  - c. Contact will be made with the affected employee(s) to:
    - i. Assess the employee's emotional need
    - ii. Support self-esteem and self-reliance
    - iii. Offer team services, as appropriate
    - iv. Activate the affected employee's social support network
3. Defusing, Demobilization, and Debriefing
  - a. The deployed CIPS team members(s) will respond to a predetermined location for the prescribed event at the direction of the CIPS team leader.
  - b. Support of a trained QMHP is required for a formal debriefing session.
4. No notes, recordings, or other records of information exposed during CIPS activities other than the [CIPS Team Activation](#) 145\_F9 will be made or maintained by CIPS team members.
5. Follow-up services
  - a. The CIPS team will remain available to the employee for follow-up services during the readjustment period.
  - b. Follow-up services will be provided to ensure all employees who need or want additional support

are given support from the team.

- c. Follow-up services will be provided to participants of the defusing, demobilization, or debriefing immediately after the initial session is complete. Follow up-services include but are not limited to:
  - i. Work location visit
  - ii. Telephone call
  - iii. Individual consultation
  - iv. Referral to the EAP
  - v. Additional group meeting
- d. Follow-up services may be initiated by:
  - i. Participant through a telephone call or personal appearance
  - ii. Supervisor request that a team member check on a participant
  - iii. Team member
  - iv. Organizational Unit Head
  - v. CIPS Coordinator for the purpose of quality assurance
- e. CIPS team members will maintain continued contact with their CIPS team leader or assistant team leader.

#### G. Operational Considerations

- 1. CIPS team members shall 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*.
- 2. This operating procedure does not interfere with the voluntary use of or referral to any other related programs or services.
- 3. Responding CIPS team members shall be considered on duty and on special assignment.
  - a. If DOC vehicles are not available, team members are eligible for travel reimbursement in accordance with Operating Procedure 240.1, *Travel*.
  - b. See Operating Procedure 110.2, *Overtime and Schedule Adjustments*, for employee compensation.
- 4. The CIPS team leaders, assistant team leaders, and all CIPS team members shall serve at the pleasure of the CIPS Coordinator and may be removed from their positions at any time without cause or warning by the Regional Operations Chief in consultation with the CIPS Team Coordinator.
- 5. A CIPS 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.

#### V. REFERENCES

Operating Procedure 030.4, *Special Investigations Unit*

Operating Procedure 110.2 *Overtime and Schedule Adjustments*

Operating Procedure 135.1 *Standards of Conduct*

Operating Procedure 240.1, *Travel*

#### VI. FORM CITATIONS

[CIPS Team Activation](#) 145\_F9

#### VII. REVIEW DATE

The office of primary responsibility shall review this operating procedure annually and re-write it no later than three years from the effective date.

*The office of primary responsibility reviewed this operating procedure in January 2018 and no changes are needed at this time.*

***Signature Copy on File***

***9/15/16***

N. H. Scott, Deputy Director of Administration

Date