

ADDITIONAL SERVICES AVAILABLE

Defusings

- are conducted soon after a critical incident, usually within 24-48 hours
- provide an opportunity to discuss the impact of a difficult event
- are much shorter, less formal, and less structured than a debriefing
- provides information and education about the stressful event and how to recover
- may determine the need for or will enhance a formal debriefing later

STRESS EDUCATION:

A variety of training programs can be designed for your agency. Listed below are examples.

Self Rescue: Surviving the Stress of Emergency Service

- Basic stress information
- Effect of stress on your body
- Understanding emotional & physical responses
- Education about debriefings and defusings
- How to access the CISM program

Giving Bad News

- Death notification training
- Assisting people through tragic news
- Dealing with survivors

Continuing education credits can apply to these programs.

**C.I.S.M.
TAKING CARE OF THE PEOPLE IN
EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**TO REQUEST A DEBRIEFING
OR DEFUSING CALL:**

(218) 727-8770

This 24 hour number is answered by the South St. Louis County Communications Center. They will put you in touch with the on-call CISM Team Member

Services of the Head of the Lakes Critical Incident Stress Programs are provided at no cost to emergency service providers.

We rely on contributions from individuals, agencies, and organizations as well as public and private grants to assure that CISM services are available within this region. Donations are tax deductible.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
PROGRAMS AVAILABLE
PLEASE CONTACT:**

Head Of The Lakes
Critical Incident Stress Management Team
C/O



Arrowhead EMS Association, Inc.
4219 Enterprise Circle
Duluth, Minnesota 55811-5719
(218) 726-0070 or (800) 247-1283

HEAD OF THE LAKES CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM

C.I.S.M. Programs
for
Emergency Response Personnel



Head of the Lakes Critical Incident Stress Management Team operates under the auspices of the Arrowhead Emergency Medical Service Association, Inc., a MN non-profit organization.

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

Emergency response personnel operate under a variety of stressors; the uncertainty of the next call, the human tragedies involved, the hazards associated with a rescue or the fear of doing something wrong. Responders can usually cope with these stressors and consider them "part of the job."

Some situations, however, produce unusually strong reactions which affect the responder's ability to function at home and on the job. As a result, they may experience strong physical and emotional reactions or may abandon involvement with their service.

Situations which produce these unusually strong reactions are referred to as **Critical Incidents**.

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING? (CISD)

A CISD is a group session led by a team of specially trained individuals including a mental health professional and several peer facilitators. The peer facilitators of the team represent personnel from a wide variety of emergency services, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, rescue workers, dispatchers, first responders, EMT's, paramedics and nurses.

A debriefing will assist the participants in understanding the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that occurred during and after the incident.

A debriefing is not a critique of the event or of the responder's performance. It is time devoted to helping the participants sort through distressing issues and to understand how a powerful event has affected them.

HOW DOES A CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING HELP?

Emergency personnel benefit from a CISD because it:

- reduces the impact of a stressful experience
- reduces isolation and the feeling of being abnormal
- promotes psychological well being
- helps prevent delayed psychological reactions
- improves coping skills for future incidents
- helps keep them productive and on the job

In general, a critical incident stress debriefing promotes a more rapid recovery from the incident and facilitates normal integration back into home and work routines.

WHAT SITUATIONS CAN BECOME CRITICAL INCIDENTS?

- sudden death or serious injury to a child
- serious injury or death of an emergency worker
- a difficult rescue effort
- victim and family known by responder
- overwhelming traumatic injuries
- natural disasters or mass casualties
- suicides
- unfavorable media coverage of an event
- several difficult incidents within a short period of time (build-up)

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT A DEBRIEFING?

- Debriefings are most often conducted 2-7 days after the incident.
- It is best to request a debriefing as soon after the incident as possible, however, it is never too late for a debriefing.
- All emergency personnel who were directly involved in the incident are invited to attend.
- Participation is optional and participant's names are not recorded. Strict confidentiality is expected of all who attend.
- Scheduling a date, time, and site for the debriefing is arranged with the requesting agency.
- Debriefings usually last no longer than 2 to 3 hours.

WHO CAN REQUEST A DEBRIEFING OF DEFUSING?

Any member of an emergency service organization or individual engaged in public safety activities is eligible and encouraged to request CISM services. This regional Team provides CISM services to the Minnesota Counties of: Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, St. Louis, and in Douglas County Wisconsin.

Individuals eligible include:

- law enforcement personnel
- fire and rescue personnel
- first responders
- ambulance personnel
- hospital staff
- dispatchers
- others as deemed appropriate