

**NASA Occupational Health Program  
Guidelines for Implementing Critical Incident  
Stress Management Services  
2002**

**Introduction**

The recognized definition of critical incident is quite broad. A critical incident is defined as any event outside of the usual realm of daily human experience that is markedly distressing and has the potential to interfere with the ability to function, either at the scene or at a later time. These incidents could include, but are not limited to, natural disasters, manmade disasters, major mission failure, terrorism, homicide, sudden death, suicide, victims of violence, witness to violence, kidnapping or hostage situations.

It is the intent of the NASA Employee Assistance Program (EAP), NPD 1830.1A and NASA Occupational Health Program Procedures, NPG 1800.1 to provide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) to employees as part of the variety of other assessments and short term counseling services offered within an atmosphere of confidentiality. The goal of CISM intervention services is to minimize the occurrence and impact of post-trauma resulting from any critical incident.

CISM includes:

- Pre-crisis education and pre-deployment briefing sessions for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) team members,—
- Disaster demobilization planning to develop a process for returning to a pre-crisis normal after a critical incident or disaster, and
- Brief small group defusing sessions immediately following an event, CISD by a trained CISD team in a small group setting, 1-3 days post-incident which includes one-to-one psychological support, and follow-up and referral mechanisms.

The NASA Occupational Health Program encourages Center EAP Officers to coordinate with appropriate Center officials to establish the process for the creation and direction of CISM teams, outlining the responsibilities for all participants including management officials, emergency operations responders, medical first responders, human resources personnel, and supervisors.

All center emergency response plans and documentation will provide for the role of the center EAP. Emergency response plans will include information on the availability and purpose of CISD, and for the requirement for designated individuals or groups to attend CISD. The nature and extent of those requiring CISD will vary by incident, but will be determined by the center EAP.

**Roles, Responsibilities, and Procedures for a Critical Incident Stress Management Plan**

Chief Health and Medical Officer:

The Chief Health and Medical Officer will ensure an on-site EAP presence and CISM is provided for critical events which affect more than one center, such as the loss of an orbiter, or a catastrophic event which affects one center, but where the local EAP resources may become overwhelmed.

### Center Directors:

Where the Chief Health and Medical Officer has identified a critical event requiring EAP and CISM involvement, Center Directors will ensure the local EAP response network has adequate resources, and that designated personnel will undergo CISD.

### Agency EAP Manager

The Agency EAP Manager shall be responsible for supporting CISM coordination, ensuring each Center's participation, advocating for individual Center contract adjustments as needed, and assisting with training as appropriate.

### Center EAP Officer (Provider)

The Center EAP Officer/Provider is the individual qualified by training to determine the extent of mandatory CISM for incidents at their center. At a minimum, CISM will be required for emergency response personnel or accident investigation personnel involved in any on-scene response to deaths occurring on center (deemed not to be from natural causes e.g. suspected suicide; industrial or vehicular accident).

The Center EAP Officer/Provider (If a contractor, working with the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative to ultimately incorporate provisions into a Statement of Work) provides pre-incident-planning including provision of training for CISD team members establishing links with community partners, and identifying at-risk populations within the Center. Once notified of a critical incident, the designated EAP clinician is responsible for meeting with emergency preparedness/first responders and management to assess impact and identify those employees affected. EAP notifies the CISD team and any community partners as appropriate and coordinates establishing a meeting place for the team and participants. The EAP clinician is responsible for leading the CISD team in providing defusing and debriefing sessions. The EAP clinicians provide one-on-one interventions, referral and follow-up services as requested. The primary Center EAP Officer is responsible for:

- Developing CISM procedures;
- Training and maintaining a CISD team, providing direction and coordination to the team;
- Ensuring proper assessment, triage, treatment, referral, and follow-up of affected employees for up to one year or a time period deemed acceptable in their professional judgment;
- Serving as, or appointing a CISD team lead; and
- Educating and coordinating with other appropriate elements concerning utilization of CISM services to include at a minimum, Center management, emergency preparedness personnel, occupational medicine staff, human resources representatives, and supervisors.
- Coordinating with local mental health providers to establish a resource network for large scale events.

CISD team members, generally drawn from the personnel, health, safety, and or security communities, participate in meetings and post-incident intervention planning. Team members provide CISD services under the direction of the EAP and assist in identifying individuals in need of further EAP services. After completion of a CISD exercise, team members will assist in follow up monitoring of impacted employees as requested or appropriate.

CISD team members are responsible for:

- Familiarization with CISM components, including procedures and protocol;
- Participating in initial and periodic planning meetings;
- Providing support for a CISD exercise following a critical incident;
- Coordinating with and executing guidance from the EAP clinician or appointed CISD team lead; and
- Participating in debriefings for CISD team members.

#### Emergency Preparedness and Medical First Responder Personnel

Designated emergency preparedness and medical first responder personnel on the Center emergency response team notify the EAP of critical incidents and coordinate arrangement of meeting facilities for CISD exercises as needed. Along with a designated human resources officer, they assist EAP in coordinating CISM efforts, identifying impacted employees, participating in post-incident demobilization, defusing, and debriefing exercises as requested by the CISD team lead. Emergency Preparedness personnel are encouraged to take CISD training.

Emergency preparedness and first responders are responsible for:

- Familiarization with CISD services;
- Notifying EAP of critical incidents;
- identifying individuals or groups impacted by a critical incident; and
- Supporting CISD exercises as requested by the CISD team lead.

#### Human Resources Officer

A designated human resources representative shall support the CISM plan through notification of the Center EAP Officer of any critical incidents personnel is aware of, assisting in identifying individuals or groups impacted by the event, and informing supervisors of the availability of CISM services. Human Resource Officers will identify to the EAP Officer center personnel assisting in major center or Agency-wide incident mitigation or recovery efforts.

#### Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for notifying the EAP, along with other designated contacts as appropriate (e.g. safety, security, medical, personnel) of any critical incidents, assisting in the identification of individuals or groups impacted by a critical incident and providing incident information facilitating the debriefing process. Supervisors are responsible for encouraging and granting time- for employees to participate in officially sanctioned CISM services. (The CISD verifies attendance for the supervisor). Supervisors should be aware of changes in performance by an impacted employee following a critical incident and notify the EAP staff of any on-going difficulties the employee may seem to be experiencing.