



# Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS

## Policies and Procedures

<b>Standard Operating Procedure: 3.28</b>	<b>Effective Date: June 8, 2023</b>
<b>Subject: Peer Support / CISM Program</b>	<b>Section: Emergency Medical Services</b>
<b>Authorized: Michael Stoner, Assistant Chief</b>	<b>Revision Date: N/A</b>

### **I. PURPOSE:**

To establish pre-incident education and preparation to enhance the stress resistance and resiliency of personnel before, during, and after the critical incidents. To establish a procedure for the operation and utilization of the Critical Incident and Peer Support Team. This shall be accomplished through a partnership with behavioral health specialist, Chaplains, and specially trained personnel within Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS

The Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS recognizes that critical incidents can be stressful to personnel. Critical Incident Stress interventions can facilitate stress management in the aftermath of a serious incident.

### **II. SCOPE OF PRACTICE:**

The Peer Support/CISM team is an organized, comprehensive, and confidential support system that provides stress management education and crisis intervention services. The team is comprised of the departments assigned team members, chaplains, and behavioral health specialist. The team is not psychotherapy or a substitute for psychotherapy and it is not the purpose of the team to provide those services. The team has resources to provide crisis support services to all personnel of Carroll County Fire and EMS following exposure to traumatic events and can assist in the referral of any personnel needing behavioral health services.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

**Peer Support/CISM Team:** Comprised of members from the Clinical Community and Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS that provide education, preparation, and critical incident support.

**Peer Support:** Individual or group support that provides knowledge, experience, emotional, social or practical assistance.

**Critical Incident Stress Management:** A comprehensive, phase sensitive, and integrated, multi-component approach to crisis and disaster intervention. The goal of critical incident stress management is to support personnel, develop resilience, restore functionality of personnel and/or refer for additional help.

**Critical Incident:** A critical incident may be defined as “stressful events which have the potential to overwhelm one’s usual coping mechanism, resulting in psychological distress and an impairment of normal individual, as well as collective, adaptive functioning (Everly & Mitchell, 2008)”

**Program Manager:** The Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS representative that gathers data and reports to the Fire Chief and County Administration.

**Team Coordinator:** A Peer Support/CISM team member (s) who are responsible for assuring the team provides the resources needed when requested.

#### IV. PROCEDURES:

##### A. Objectives

1. To prepare the departments personnel to build resistance and resilience and to manage the behavioral aspect of traumatic events by means of stress education and support
2. To provide timely and appropriate interventions based on a careful needs assessment
3. To assist, when requested by intradepartmental agencies or members and provide those same services when requested by other organizations in need of peer support/CISM services
4. To provide follow-up services to assure that impacted personnel are achieving the best possible restoration of personal wellbeing
5. To provide referral resources such as an Employee Assistance Program, Behavioral Health Specialist, counseling services, and medical specialist
6. To provide on scene support to personnel during stressful events
7. To provide support and resources after a critical incident

##### B. Some examples of critical incidents may include.

1. A death or serious injury of an emergency responder in the line of duty or a threat of a serious injury or death
2. A death or serious injury of a civilian as the result of Fire/EMS Department activities such as a motor vehicle collision involving apparatus, or Law Enforcement use of force/weapons discharge
3. Death of a child

4. Any death that follows a prolonged amount of emotional and physical energy during a rescue or recovery
5. Hostage situations that pose a threat to rescuers physical or psychological well-being
6. An event that causes mass causality
7. Negative attention from the community or media

#### C. On Scene Traumatic Stress Management

1. On Scene request can only be made by the Incident Commander or DFEMS Command Staff
2. Incident Commander or DFEMS Command Staff shall utilize ECC for the request of the Peer Support/ CISM team during incidents
3. The officers and supervisors play a crucial role in minimizing the impact of incident stress by limiting the exposure of personnel by providing rest breaks, rotation of crew assignments, and relieving fatigued personnel
4. In the case of prolonged incidents or extraordinary incidents such as a mass casualty or active shooter, peer support/CISM personnel may be called to the scene to assist with stress management. Peer Support/CISM personnel called to the scene shall:
  - i. Serve as an advisory and support role only
  - ii. Shall not interrupt the incident objectives established by incident command
  - iii. Shall not engage in on scene operations while functioning in the peer support/CISM role unless a duty to act requirement exist

#### D. Group Interventions

1. Departmental personnel are at no time required to attend any group intervention; however, it is important to remember that each person may have something to add that could be beneficial to colleagues in a restorative healing process
2. Attendance in a post incident intervention process is strongly encouraged for all personnel directly exposed to an incident
3. Only those personnel involved in a specific incident and peer support/CISM team members are permitted to attend
4. Personnel involved in post incident intervention shall be placed out of service during the session
5. Post incident intervention shall be conducted anywhere ample space, privacy, and confidentiality can be assured along with freedom from distractions
6. All radios, cell phones, and other electronic devices shall remain off during intervention to ensure confidentiality

#### E. Team Access and activation of the peer support/CISM outside the emergency incident

1. Incident Commander or DFEMS Staff shall contact ECC to request a response
2. Emergency Communication Center shall follow the call down list to notify a Team Coordinator
3. Team Coordinator shall then be responsible to assemble the team =for the response
4. Access to services can be made on duty or off duty
5. Services shall be available 24 hours per day 365 days a year
6. Personnel requesting assistance may contact any member of the team.
7. Any personnel may contact ECC to contact team member
8. Request for assistance from other county agencies shall be made through ECC and shall be directed to Program Manager

#### F. Peer Support/CISM Response

1. Upon activation of the CISM Team, it is the responsibility of the CISM Team Coordinator or the contacted member to gather pertinent incident information. The CISM Team Coordinator or contacted member will determine the necessary recourses and initiate the appropriate response
2. When arriving to the scene, the team members will report to the command post. The designated CISM Team Leader shall consult with the Incident Commander to define the scope and boundaries of the incident and determine what services may be provided
3. After consultation with the Incident Commander, the CISM Team Leader will designate actions for on-scene team members ensuring that team members remain outside of any defined Hot Zone. Ideally team members will be utilized away from the scene to assist in providing diffusing sessions when the personnel leave the incident scene or go off duty. Following the incident, team members will be utilized in providing Critical Incident support sessions
4. Following a critical incident, support may be requested by the Station Chief or designated officer for the CISM team to provide support. The team will provide the appropriate intervention based on the needs of the impacted personnel. This support can be provided at the fire station or another neutral location. This support may be either group, individual/peer support or referral

#### G. Peer Support Program Functions:

1. Preventive/Educational
  - i. The team engages with personnel or groups about mental health related information with the intent to prevent crises in the future or educate personnel on how to use the program
2. Non-Crisis Response

- i. Discussion of private issues that may or may not be related to Fire and EMS. These may include how to access other services that are available to assist personnel.
3. Chaplain Response
  - i. When a Chaplain is available, personnel may reach out to that individual for any reason. Any Chaplain assigned to the team is authorized to maintain confidentiality and is not required to share information with the team other than how many interactions the Chaplain has had in the previous month.
4. Non incident Crisis Response
  - i. Are classified into two categories
5. Crisis Response (Non-Incident)
  - i. Category 1 - One on One peer Support
    1. Personnel can reach out to any team member for assistance
  - ii. Category 2- Planned Events
    1. Examples of planned events could include funeral details, out of county events, hospitalization of personnel
    2. These events shall be coordinated by the Program Manager and Team Coordinators.
    3. All planned events need to be approved by the Department of Fire and EMS Chief or designee.

#### H. Application Process

1. Personnel interested in joining the Peer Support/CISM team shall submit an application for review by the team
2. Applications shall be submitted to the Program Manager for review and presentation to the team
3. Applications must include a letter of recommendation from the Volunteer Chief for volunteer members or Shift Commander for Career members.
4. Applications will be reviewed at the next scheduled Peer Support/CISM meeting and the applicant will be notified in writing of confirmation or denial of the application.
5. Team member applications will be accepted as the need presents and can be obtained by contacting the Program Manager.

#### I. Team Composition

1. The Peer Support/CISM shall be reflective of the personnel of Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS. The team shall consist of Career Employees and Volunteer members of various ranks and tenure
2. The Peer Support/CISM Team should consist of the following
  - i. A minimum of eight Members/Employees of Carroll County Fire/EMS Department.

- ii. A minimum of 2 Licensed and insured mental health professionals in the clinical community such as: Counselors, Clinical Social Workers, or Psychologists.
  - iii. One member of the Carroll County Fire/EMS Chaplain Corps if available.
3. Peer Support/CISM team members shall remain without any disciplinary action or investigations. Any team member that is not in good standing shall be suspended from the team until which time they have been reinstated or investigation is completed.

#### J. Compensation for Career Employees

1. Employees shall attend initial training on their own time with the Department paying for the required training programs
2. Any required annual training will be compensated at the employee's overtime rate
3. Employees that are activated while off duty will be compensated hour for hour at their overtime rate.

#### K. Program Reporting

1. All associated costs, and involvement shall be documented and reported to the Chief of DFEMS through the Program Manager
2. All data collected shall be based upon statistics and shall not include any names or identifying factors as to maintain confidentiality
3. The following data, at a minimum, shall be collected by the program manager through a system that has been approved by the Chief and the team members
  - i. Incident call outs.
  - ii. One on one meetings

#### L. Program Training Requirements

1. At a minimum, all members of the team must have completed the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) courses titled "Assisting Individuals in Crisis" and "Group Crisis Intervention".
2. Preferred courses include:
  - a. The IAFF Peer Support two-day course
  - b. Mental Health First Aid
3. Chaplain members of the team must also have completed the ICISF course "Pastoral Crisis Intervention".
4. Members shall regularly participate in annual in-service training, continuing education, and scheduled meetings to strengthen team skills and knowledge.

#### M. Confidentiality

1. The CISM team operates under the same privacy limits as HIPAA. With the exception that a subject of critical incident team support is a danger to self or others or is abusing a child or vulnerable individual, no information will be shared with the department. This includes not revealing who participates and what is discussed in the critical incident interventions

VI. RECISION

This Standard Operating Procedure rescinds all directives regarding Critical Incident Stress Management or similar content previously issued for personnel of the Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS.