

	MARICOPA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES	
	Subject CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM	Policy Number GC-22
		Effective Date 09-24-25
Related Information Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) 38-1111 and 38-672 International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) GC-17, <i>Employee Disciplinary Procedures</i> GJ-2, <i>Critical Incident Response</i>		Supersedes GC-22 (03-10-23)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Office Policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program.

POLICY

It is the policy of the Office to provide support to employees experiencing high levels of stress while performing their duties or during their off-duty time. The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program was established to mitigate the impact of stress on employees and their immediate family members before, during, and after a critical incident or traumatic event. CISM personnel will utilize the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) CISM model to facilitate a controlled environment for individuals to express and discuss their feelings stemming from a critical incident or traumatic event, whether it occurs on or off-duty. Additionally, CISM staff will offer peer support and other therapeutic strategies to mitigate stress, promote employee well-being, and provide crisis intervention and access to social determinants of health resources for employees during and after an incident.

DEFINITIONS

Crisis Intervention: Aims to help individuals recover from a critical incident or traumatic event and by providing access support resources within the relevant social determinants of health.

Critical Incident: A critical incident or traumatic event, whether on or off-duty, that causes emotional or psychological distress significant enough to overwhelm an individual's psychological defense mechanisms. Typically, these incidents are sudden and powerful events that fall outside the realm of ordinary experiences. Due to their sudden and unusual nature, they can have strong psychological effects, even on well-trained and experienced employees. The term "critical incident," as used in this Office Policy, should not be confused with the term specified in Office Policy GJ-2, *Critical Incident Response*.

Debriefing: A confidential, structured group meeting which is facilitated by Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team members and is under the guidance of mental health professionals. Those attending the Debriefing will be affected employees, mental health professionals, CISM team members, and may include affected employees from outside agencies. The meeting provides affected employees with an opportunity to discuss the critical incident or traumatic event and share their reactions. The process is based on crisis and educational intervention theory and is designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event, prevent subsequent development of stress, and identify individuals who may require a professional, mental-health follow-up.

Defusing: This is a process of steps which occur during, or immediately following, a critical incident or traumatic event in which informal group meetings are held to discuss a traumatic event, or series of traumatic events. It is

directed at stabilizing each participant, allowing them to vent and discuss the feelings that occur, and it assists the CISM team members in determining whether a debriefing may be necessary. Those attending a Defusing will be affected employees, to include employees from outside agencies, and CISM team members.

Family Crisis Intervention: This intervention involves using individual crisis intervention techniques with one or more family members, beginning with the person who requests help. The goal is to help the family recover from an event and connect with support resources within the relevant social determinants of health.

Follow-up: A referral system where resources are offered based on identified social determinants of health, and CISM staff follow up to confirm connections or attempts until the case is closed.

Peer Support: Offers employees and/or their family members a structured way to give and receive help and support. It is based on principles of respect and shared responsibility. A "peer" is someone who is equal to others in the group, shares similar demographics or social backgrounds, and may have recovered from similar lived experiences.

Prevention Education: This prevention includes stress management education, stress resistance, resilience, and crisis mitigation training for individuals and teams within the Office.

Social Determinants of Health: The Social Determinants of Health (SDH) encompass non-medical factors that have a significant impact on health outcomes. SDH involves the circumstances in which individuals are born, grow, work, live, and age, as well as the broader forces and systems that shape daily life. Social determinants of health that can influence health equity in both positive and negative ways are included but not limited to income and social protection, education, unemployment and job security, working conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic amenities, the environment, social inclusion and non-discrimination, structural conflict, and access to affordable, quality health services.

Traumatic Event: When an event, or series of events, causes a lot of stress, it is called a traumatic event. Traumatic events are marked by a sense of horror, helplessness, serious injury, or the threat of serious injury or death.

PROCEDURES

1. **Primary Objective of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM):** The CISM Program is designed to hasten the rate of recovery for people who are having reactions to critical incidents or traumatic events, whether on or off duty. Defusing and debriefings are not psychotherapy sessions; their purpose is to provide employees with a controlled setting to vent and discuss their feelings related to experiencing a critical incident or traumatic event. Defusing and debriefings can often accelerate the recovery time of an employee from stress-related problems and may permit them to return to work with a better understanding of the emotions they are feeling.
2. **Activating the CISM Team:** Team members may respond when there is a reasonable likelihood that an employee may be, or has been, subjected to a significant amount of abnormal stress from a critical incident or traumatic event. Activation may be made by the Communications Division and may be during or following a critical incident and/or traumatic event.
 - A. Supervisors shall request that the CISM Team be activated for any of the following situations including, but not limited to:
 1. Officer-involved shooting;
 2. Line-of-duty death;

3. Serious line-of-duty injury;
 4. Prolonged or violent tactical operation; or
 5. Critical incident scene as defined in this Policy.
- B. Supervisors may request that the CISM Team be activated for any of the following situations which may include, but are not limited to:
1. CPR being administered.
 2. Incidents involving death or serious injury to a child; or
 3. An incident that has occurred producing emotional or psychological distress sufficient to overwhelm an individual's psychological defense mechanisms.
- C. Any employee can arrange a one-on-one defusing by contacting the Communications Division and obtaining the phone number of an available CISM Peer Support Specialist. Employees or employees on behalf of their immediate family member can request the assistance of CISM and are not required to identify themselves or provide any information that would violate the employees' anonymity when contacting the Communications Division. The CISM team member shall make all necessary arrangements for the employee and/or family member to receive the appropriate assistance.
- D. All or part of the CISM Team may be activated depending upon the type and scope of the critical incident or traumatic event and the number of employees either directly or indirectly involved in the incident.
1. The supervisor requesting the call-out shall notify the Communications Division supervisor to contact the CISM on-call team member and advise them of the nature of the incident.
 2. The CISM on-call team member shall evaluate the situation, determine what actions are needed and, if necessary, contact additional CISM team members.
 3. The CISM on-call team member shall contact the supervisor in charge of the investigation to coordinate on-scene defusing.
 4. The CISM on-call team member shall send a minimum of two team members for any activation.
 5. The Health and Wellness Division Commander and Peer Program Supervisor can request the activation of CISM team members from another agency.
- E. At the conclusion of an incident, a supervisor may request a debriefing be held for employees who were either directly or indirectly involved in the incident. Debriefings will normally be held within three working days of the incident.
- F. Every effort shall be made to minimize the use of overtime, and use on-duty personnel first, if available, before utilizing off-duty personnel to conduct the CISM Program.
3. **CISM Team:** The CISM Team is comprised of the following individuals:

- A. Health and Wellness Division Commander: The Health and Wellness Division Commander in the Human Resources Bureau participates in efforts to enhance wellness services for employees of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and their families. This role plans, supervises, organizes, and directs the activities of the Health and Wellness and CISM/Peer Support teams, liaises between first responders and command staff, and coordinates mental health and CISM resources, activities, interventions, and program development.
 - B. Peer Support Program Supervisor: The Peer Support Supervisor assists with implementing, coordinating, and administering programs of the Health and Wellness Division. This position supervises staff, trains, oversees, and supervises the technical and administrative operations of the CISM peer support functions. The Peer Support Program Supervisor shall be a coordinator who has completed stress management training through a recognized organization.
 - C. Peer Support Specialist: The specialist is a full-time employee who is assigned to the Health and Wellness Division and shall have completed stress management training through a recognized organization and is trained to provide peer support consistent with the requirements of Arizona Revised Statute (ARS) 38-1111. The specialist is selected and appointed by the Health and Wellness Division Commander and the Peer Support Program Supervisor, with approval from the Chief Human Resources Officer or their designee. Specialists are responsible for:
 - 1. Evaluating the need for a debriefing or a defusing when an intervention is requested;
 - 2. Contacting CISM team members and coordinating with the appropriate supervisors to facilitate an intervention;
 - 3. Reviewing and assisting in revising CISM related policy and procedures; and
 - 4. Assisting the Health and Wellness Division Commander and the Peer Support Program Supervisor in the selection of new team members.
 - D. CISM Extended Team Members: Extended team members are personnel whose regular assignments are outside the Health and Wellness Division who have completed CISM stress management training through a recognized organization.
 - E. CISM Mental Health Professional: The CISM Mental Health Professional is a contracted professional with the Office, or through employee benefits, a licensed professional pursuant to ARS 38-672. A mental health professional is not required to be at a defusing; however, when available, shall attend debriefings based on the complexity of the situation.
4. **Confidentiality:** Any information obtained by CISM team members during the course of defusing or debriefing shall be kept strictly confidential to protect the employee and any other persons involved in the critical incident or traumatic event. CISM team members, who violate the confidentiality of an employee, shall be subject to criminal and/or disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, as specified in Office Policy GC-17, *Employee Disciplinary Procedures*. The release of confidential information shall require the consent of the employee, or that employee's legal representative, in writing, except, as specified in ARS 38-1111.
5. **CISM Extended Team Member Selection Process:** Potential CISM Extended Team candidates will be selected in accordance with guidelines established by the Health and Wellness Division Commander. Generally, the selection process will include the following steps and considerations:
- A. When it becomes necessary to select employees for the CISM Extended Team, the Peer Support Program Supervisor shall be responsible for coordinating the effort.

- B. Any Office employee who is not on initial probation will be eligible to apply. Announcements shall be published in the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Administrative Broadcasts and must include a link for the information required from the candidate.
 - C. Candidate's will be required to submit a memorandum through the chain of command to the Health and Wellness Division Commander. The candidate's education, experience, and background shall be evaluated by the Health and Wellness Division Commander. The candidate must receive a positive recommendation from both their immediate and second-level supervisors before proceeding.
 - D. The candidate will be invited to participate in a prescreening interview to discuss the reason for their interest. If approved to move forward in the process, they will be invited to complete a job shadowing shift after completing the CISM Confidentiality Agreement. The job shadowing shift will function as the oral interview process for the candidate.
 - E. The results of a candidate's job shadowing shift will be debriefed by the candidate and the Health and Wellness Commander and the Peer Support Program Supervisor, or any full-time CISM Peer Support Specialist.
 - F. Once selected, the candidate is required to attend and successfully complete a certification course through a recognized organization that delivers critical incident stress management training, prior to becoming a member and performing any duties.
6. **CISM Extended Team Member Requirements:** Team members shall be required to complete the following:
- A. Annual continuing education training on the CISM subject. The amount of annual training will depend on the availability of training.
 - B. Monthly commitment to three first call shifts, 1700 to 0800 on weekdays, or 0800 Saturday through 0800 on Sunday, or 0800 Sunday through 0800 Monday.
 - C. Annually attend 75% of the Office CISM Team meetings.
 - D. Annually attend 75% of the state-wide quarterly CISM meetings.
 - E. CISM Extended Team members have the option to withdraw from their active CISM responder assignment at any time and instead become a CISM back-up team member. In this role they would be required to volunteer annually for five Health and Wellness/CISM Division events.
7. **CISM Performance Evaluation:** The Peer Support Supervisor shall provide supervisory notes for each CISM team member monthly for Peer Support Specialists and after a volunteer shift for Extended Team members, through Blue Team. The direct supervisor of the CISM Extended Team member will use the supervisory notes to assist in preparing the employee's annual performance appraisal to document their performance as a CISM Extended team member.
8. **Unsatisfactory Performance:** CISM team members who fail to perform satisfactorily shall be removed from the team with the approval of the Chief Human Resources Officer or designee. Members removed from the team shall be issued a letter of removal from the Health and Wellness Division Commander through the chain of command. The following may be considered as reasons for removal as a CISM team member:
- A. Failure to attend the annual mandatory callouts for their assignment.

- B. Failure to attend 75% of the Office CISM Team meetings annually.
- C. Failure to respond to employee needs as required by certification.