



# Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) Available through your EAP

## WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

A traumatic event, known in the workplace as a critical incident, is any event that causes an unusually intense emotional stress reaction. Critical incidents can be unexpected, involve personal danger or loss, create uncertainty and involve exposure to shocking sights, sounds or smells. The distress people experience after a critical incident may limit their ability to cope, impair their ability to adjust and negatively impact their work environment. The stress response can be immediate or delayed and can be triggered by one or by a series of events.

## WHY DEAL WITH A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

It is to both the employee's and employer's benefit to help workers manage the impact of a workplace critical incident. Research indicates that workers exposed to a critical incident that is dealt with inappropriately are likely to experience more personal and health problems than before the incident. Workers who are not supported are at greater risk of using more sick days, having lower productivity or leaving their employment.

## WHAT IS CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM)?

Critical Incident Stress Management, or CISM, is an intervention protocol developed specifically for dealing with traumatic events. It is a formal, highly-structured and professionally recognized process for helping those involved in a critical incident to share their experiences, vent emotions, learn about stress reactions and symptoms and given referral for further help if required. It is not psychotherapy. It is a confidential, voluntary and educative process, sometimes called 'psychological first aid'.

## WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING (CISD)?

A Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) is a process that may prevent or limit the development of post-traumatic stress in people exposed to critical incidents.

Provided within a clinically appropriate timeframe following a critical incident, on-site group CISDs are offered for groups of individuals who have been similarly affected by or exposed to an incident. Professionally conducted debriefings help people cope with, and recover from an incident's aftereffects. These sessions provide a safe, structured and supportive environment for addressing common reactions, offering information to promote resiliency, and identifying those who may need further resources.

## WHEN SHOULD A CISD BE HELD?

Ideally, a CISD should be held within 24 to 72 hours of an incident.

## HOW DO I REQUEST A CISD?

Your company representative should call the toll-free EAP Helpline number to request a CISD. Within 30 minutes of the notification of an incident, one of our Incident Managers will contact you to discuss the incident and conduct a needs assessment. The EAP can offer various responses including information, practical support, telephone crisis support, management consultation, on-site group meetings, and face-to-face counseling. We take the initial approach of providing psychological first aid, and assigning the most appropriate intervention under the circumstances.

## WHAT IS THE LENGTH OF A CISD?

Although the length of a CISD varies by the situation, CISDs typically last two hours.



DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES

**In the case of a critical incident, call  
your EAP. We are available 24/7.**

**(866) 327-2400**  
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