



Critical Incident Crisis Management (CISM) Peer Support: Guidelines for Teams

If you are considering starting a CISM Peer Support team, below are some ideas that you might review to guide you in moving forward. These were first developed by Jeff Mitchell and placed in the Second Edition of the Group Crisis Intervention Workbook. These steps are laid out in sequence, but you can proceed in the fashion that works for your community. If all these guidelines are addressed, you should be able to function well as a CISM team. CISM Team is not an advertisement for a Mental Health organization.

Step One (1): Identify the need for the CISM team.

Why do you think your agency/community needs a CISM team? What kind of events have or are happening that are affecting the personnel you hope to serve? Based upon these identified needs, a rationale for the team's existence should both pragmatically and theoretically emerge.

Step Two (2): Clearly state the Mission and goals of the team.

Clearly state the purpose of the team and the constituency to be served by the team. Are you going to be a team that serves the general community, or First Responders, or just your agency? Are you going to be an in-house peer team or external and independent? Adopt the ICISF models of intervention for your team. (There are many models of crisis intervention; the ICISF model is recognized as the most widespread around the world and best-established model) All teams must create CISM Team Standard Operating Procedures and Bylaws.(see #9)

Step Three (3): Determine how the team will be legally constituted.

- Are you within an existing organization? Get approval from the leadership of the organization.
- Are you going to be a group of volunteers?
- Are you going to become a Limited License Corporation?
- Are you going to apply to become a non-profit corporation?

Step Four (4): Obtain legal counsel to operationally define issues such as malpractice, standards of care, confidentiality, "good Samaritan" practices, necessary liability insurance coverage, etcetera.

- This will vary based on mission of team, local laws (some states have requirements of teams
- Most teams do not get liability insurances or formal corporate status depending again on mission of team

Step Five (5): Determine how the team will be funded.

- Initial funding to get an adequate number of team members trained in both the Group Crisis Intervention and the Assisting Individuals in Crisis courses, or the combined course as taught by an ICISF Approved Instructor, ICISF Live Remote Virtual training or Asynchronous online courses.
- Ongoing expenses of operation
 - Cell phone
 - Access to copy machines or printers for handouts etc
 - Meeting space for team members



- Refresher training for team members periodically
- Training to add team members over time
- Make arrangements for ongoing "in-service" training

Step Six (6): Delineate guidelines for team membership and the specific roles to be performed.

- Administrative structure (terms and responsibilities)
 - Chairperson/Team Coordinator
 - Clinical Director - Should be a licensed counselor, Social Worker, Psychologist or Chaplain that has counseling experience (The clinical director should be different from the Team Coordinator)
- Dispatching functions and procedures
- Response functions,
 - Listing of team member roles
 - Listing mental health providers' roles
 - Use of paraprofessionals (as applicable)
- Clinical mental health oversight/supervision
- Team member selection criteria
- Agreement of full confidentiality of team interventions within the organization and any limits to that (mandated reporters' situations).

Step Seven (7): Determine what criteria and mechanisms will be used to activate the team.

- Determine what systems will be used to activate the team
- Determine what backup systems will be used in the case of a mass disaster or widespread communication failure.

Step Eight (8): Stipulate guidelines and procedures for follow-up for team members after a crisis response.

- Use of the PASS (Post Action Staff Support) model is suggested

Step Nine (9): Create a clear, practical operating manual which contains policies and procedures, and which addresses all of the aforementioned issues.

- Best to make this an electronic version which is distributed and kept up to date for all team members
- It allows consistency and direction for team interventions

Step Ten (10): All team members must have completed the core courses listed below.

- Assisting Individuals in Crisis
- Group Crisis Intervention

Continued Training (Suggested But Not Required):

- Advanced Assisting Individuals in Crisis
- Advanced Group Crisis Intervention
- Suicide Prevention Intervention & Postvention
- Suicide Awareness

Please email cismteams@icisf.org with any questions.



International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.

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