Georgia Department of Public Safety
Policy Manual

SUBJECT	POLICY NUMBER
CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT	**5.04**

DISTRIBUTION	DATE
ALL EMPLOYEES	**12/10/2012**

5.04.1 Purpose

Trained and experienced employees of the Department constitute one of its most valuable resources. The Department recognizes that situations will be encountered that require action, which will result in varying degrees of emotional and psychological stress. The purpose of this policy is to make available a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program to minimize the effects caused by critical incidents and to assist employees in coping effectively with reactions to these incidents.

The purpose of this policy is to establish departmental responsibilities, practices, and procedures for the Critical Incident Support program.

5.04.2 Policy

It is the policy of the Georgia Department of Public Safety to provide employees assistance following involvement in any traumatic incident or critical incident.

5.04.3 Definitions

A. Critical Incident – any incident, action, or event, which has the potential for producing significant emotional trauma that may adversely affect the psychological well-being of personnel. A critical incident may include, but is not limited to:

    1. Line of duty death;

    2. Serious line of duty injury or assault;

    3. Suicide;

    4. Officer involved shootings;

    5. Multi-casualty incidents or disasters;

    6. Significant events involving children;

    7. Incidents involving a known victim;

B. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) – a collection of recognized psychological techniques used by both trained lay-personnel (peers) and professionals to provide care for personnel exposed to potential or actual traumatic

incidents. It emphasizes both individual and facilitated small group discussions among impacted persons and caregivers.

C. Critical Incident Support – an adjunct to professional medical, psychological, spiritual and other referral services. It does not replace the counseling and mental health benefits provided by EAP resources or by employees' health plans. Critical Incident Support does not provide substance abuse or psychological counseling. It does provide first-responder support to those who have experienced a critical incident.

D. Critical Incident (Peer) Support – available to all Department of Public Safety personnel and their immediate families after a critical incident. With appropriate approvals, these services may be offered to the members of other Georgia law enforcement organizations. The techniques are recommended for all persons exposed to traumatic situations. Candidates for support may include witnesses, victims, employees and others.

E. Critical Incident Support Team – A group of employees who have volunteered to participate in the Critical Incident Support Program and are trained in critical incident stress management techniques. They would be detached to assist fellow employees, their families, and other law enforcement personnel in the aftermath of critical incidents. The success of this program is predicated on the fact that law enforcement personnel may initially be more inclined to seek the counsel of fellow officers.

5.04.4 Procedures

A. Staffing

The Critical Incident Support Program is coordinated by the Critical Incident Support Administrator and consists of the following participants:

1. Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) – Employed, contract and volunteer mental health professionals who have demonstrated experience in police counseling and debriefing and who are licensed to practice in the State of Georgia or by a similar licensing authority. A preference is expressed for those who are associated with and support the philosophy and practice of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).

2. Critical Incident Support Steering Committee – Consists of six members: Human Resources Director, MCCD Chief, GSP Commanding Officer, Capitol Police Commander, Critical Incident Support Administrator, and Critical Incident Support Team Coordinator. The Critical Incident Support Administrator and the Critical Incident Support Coordinator will be appointed by the Commissioner.

3. The Critical Incident Support Selection Committee consists of the Administrator, the Coordinator and four Assistant Coordinators. Assistant Coordinators are recommended by the Administrator and approved by the Coordinator, their chain of command and by the Commissioner.

4. Critical Incident Support Team – Employees selected by the Commissioner upon the recommendation of the Critical Incident Support Selection Committee and who have been trained in peer support by a trainer licensed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).

B. Program Procedures

1. It is the duty and responsibility of every employee to be alert to the need for a colleague to be referred to the program so that timely peer support and/or professional assistance may be offered.

2. The Critical Incident Support Team (CIS Team) will make every effort to respond to every critical incident involving DPS personnel. The CIS Team Coordinator or an Assistant Coordinator will determine the nature of the initial response and the nature of any additional or ongoing response based on the best available estimate of the situation. Unless it is clearly unnecessary, face to face contact between a Critical Incident Support Team Member (CIS Team Member) and a potentially impacted employee will be the preferred means of first response. Team Coordinators will coordinate with appropriate members of the chain of command.

3. Supervisors who are notified of or become aware of a need should begin the Critical Incident Support process during or as soon as possible after a critical incident. Supervisors should arrange for a CIS Team response by contacting any one of the Team Coordinators while impacted personnel are on-duty or minimally within 24-hours of the incident. (Note: It is best to conduct the initial meeting with an impacted person within 24 hours and not later than 72 hours following the incident for maximum benefit.)

4. Any employee who identifies a critical incident may initiate a response by contacting their supervisor. The supervisor should contact a Team Coordinator to assist in evaluating the need for Critical Incident Support and/or professional support.

5. Team members involved in a critical incident shall not be utilized to provide Peer Support for that incident.

6. Team Coordinators shall utilize the call-out roster, when practical, to summon Team Members determined to be the best suited to respond to the incident.

7. Supervisors shall request Critical Incident Support response to the following critical incidents:

    a. Officer involved shooting that results in death or serious injury to anyone.

    b. Officer involved vehicular pursuit/crash that results in death or serious injury to anyone.

    c. Any other officer involved incident that results in death or serious injury to anyone.

    d. Traumatic death of an employee.

    e. Critical incidents involving children.

    f. Accidental discharge of a firearm with injury.

    g. Any other incident where employees witness or are involved in a traumatic event.

    h. Incidents involving:

        1) Unusually large numbers of victims.

2) Victims who are familiar to or have a special relationship with involved employees.

3) Prolonged, stressful involvement of employees.

4) Special or unusual media attention.

8. Critical incidents can have a cumulative effect over several years. Therefore, the on-scene commander responsible for supervising an incident such as those described above shall advise the Critical Incident Support Administrator, through channels of the potentially stressful incident(s). The notification shall include whether Critical Incident Support resources were called to the scene and whether the personnel involved accepted or declined support.

9. Team Members shall not interfere with the investigation or incident management. Team members shall confer with the on-scene commander or primary investigator prior to meeting with the impacted parties.

10. Team Members will instruct employees involved in Peer Support activities that they should not make statements of fact that may be related to any criminal or administrative investigation.

11. The purpose of a Critical Incident Support contact is not to investigate the facts surrounding a critical incident. The purpose of Critical Incident Support is to try to understand the emotional impact that the critical incident has had on the participants and other impacted persons and to explore ways to lessen that harmful impact. Team members engaged in peer support interactions with involved impacted employees will stop employees who appear to be making statements of fact that are related to a criminal or administrative investigation.

12. Any time Mental Health Professional (MHPs) are asked to meet with a group of DPS employees as a result of a critical incident, Team Members will be present to facilitate and to learn. If a MHP is working with a DPS person subsequent to a critical incident and if the MHP requests assistance from Team Members, that assistance will be provided. The Critical Incident Support Program will monitor those individuals who have been referred to MHPs as a result of a critical incident. MHPs and the Critical Incident Support Administrator (CIS Administrator) shall work together to determine the best plan to provide effective assistance on a case by case basis.

13. The CIS Administrator shall maintain a current call-out roster and distribute updated copies containing the Team members' names, assignments and contact telephone numbers to necessary staff members. These lists are for emergency use only. The strongly preferred method for obtaining Critical Incident Support services is to contact a Team Coordinator so that the appropriate resource can be dispatched.

14. Employees shall contact their supervisor, if they believe that they or another person should be referred for Critical Incident Support services. Except in exigent situations, a response must be authorized by a Team Coordinator.

15. If Critical Incident Support is requested of a Team Member by anyone other than a Coordinator, the Team Member should contact a Team Coordinator for a determination of who should respond. A response which is neither directed nor approved by a Team Coordinator should be a very unusual occurrence.

16. Follow-up meetings will be scheduled by the Team Coordinator. It will be the responsibility of the participating Team Coordinator, in consultation with Mental Health Staff, to determine the nature of follow-up to be prescribed. An employee may be referred to a MHP by the CIS Administrator. Either EAP or other licensed professional resources may be utilized.

17. With the exception of an active emergency response to a critical incident all utilization of personnel for Peer Support will be with the permission of the Troop Commander/Region Commander or equivalent or their designee. Team Members are selected for a particular assignment based on their ability, their training, their experience and their suitability for a specific assignment. For that reason Commanders/Directors are encouraged to supply the individual who has been requested, where possible.

18. The Team Member who made the contact or the Lead in a group response will give a detailed out-briefing to the Team Coordinator after all responses. The CIS Administrator will be briefed on all but the most routine responses. Guidance may be sought from a Mental Health Professional at any time.

19. Critical Incident Stress Management techniques can be anticipated and employed prior to, during and after an emergency response to major disaster scenes. Commanders who are aware of potentially traumatic major scenes should incorporate pre- and post- exposure care in their critical incident response planning.

C. Critical Incident Support Team – Selection and Training

1. The Critical Incident Support Selection Committee will recommend suitable candidates for CIS Team membership to the Commissioner.

2. When recommending candidates for CIS Team membership the Committee shall review each candidate's history and will consider any supervisory comments, letters of appreciation or other enclosures that reflect upon the candidate's judgment, maturity, and ability to communicate with people. Specific criteria for consideration will include, but are not limited to the following:

   The candidate's

   a. Basic listening and empathy skills.

   b. Exposure to critical incidents.

   c. Motivation for becoming a Team Member.

   d. Standing in the Department.

   e. Ability to maintain confidentiality.

   f. Non-judgmental approach to personal behavior, lifestyles and personal problems.

   g. Ability to recognize common crisis indicators (e.g. depression, suicidality and substance abuse).

  h. Willingness and availability to attend training sessions and regularly scheduled meetings.

  i. Patrol or equivalent field experience.

3. Any person who has received, in the past three years, an adverse action, an unfavorable fitness for duty evaluation, notice(s) of performance problems/deficiencies, or an overall unsatisfactory performance rating shall not be eligible for consideration.

4. Team Members must be willing to respond to a request when called out by a Team Coordinator, a Command Officer or other appropriate authority.

5. Team Members shall complete a course of formal training approved by ICISF and/or given by ICISF licensed trainers and shall attend regular training sessions organized by the CIS Administrator.

6. Complaints about CIS Team will be investigated in accordance with the requirements of DPS Policy #8.02 - Complaints.

7. A CIS Team Member may be removed from the program by the Commissioner/Commanding Officer upon the recommendation of the Critical Incident Support Steering Committee/Troop Commander. Examples of conduct warranting removal include:

  a. Breach confidentiality.

  b. Lack of satisfactory participation.

  c. Inability to participate.

  d. Voluntary withdrawal from the program.

  e. Poor performance at regular duty assignment.

  f. Poor performance as a Team Member.

D. Critical Incident Support Team Conduct

1. The privacy of those who received Critical Incident Support must be protected.

2. A Critical Incident Support Team Member shall not divulge the identity of an employee who requests support, or discuss information obtained while acting in a peer support capacity with anyone else other than the participating Team Members and/or MHPs, unless required by law or ordered to do so by the Team Member's Division Director, the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Special Investigations, or the Director of Legal Services. If a CIS Team Member is asked to divulge information regarding information obtained as a Peer Support Team Member in an administrative investigation, the member shall have the opportunity to speak with the member's Division Director or the Director of Human Resources prior to divulging the information.

3. Disclosure of information shall be required in the following circumstances:

  a. If the employee authorizes disclosure in writing.

b. If the information obtained suggests that the employee is a danger to himself/herself or a danger to other persons.

   c. If employee misconduct that constitutes a violation of state or federal law, or a serious violation of departmental policy is admitted. A Team Member who learns that an employee is engaging in illegal activity shall inform the CIS Administrator who shall inform the Commissioner.

   d. In response to a valid subpoena.

E. Record Keeping

   1. Notes, records or recordings detailing the information shared in any Critical Incident Support activity shall not be kept.

   2. Statistical reporting information will be maintained as part of the program. However, all information shall be kept in a manner that will not identify the employee so that the privacy of the impacted employee may be protected to the extent possible.

   3. The CIS Team Coordinator will provide evaluation forms to persons who participate in Peer Support activities. Such forms will be submitted anonymously. The CIS Administrator will use the evaluations to judge the effectiveness of this program.

F. Time-Keeping and Scheduling

   1. The Critical Incident Support activities of Team Members are work activities and will be reported and compensated just like any other time worked.

   2. If a member is called out and the callout causes the member to work overtime, the member will receive compensatory time as outlined in DPS Policy #5.13 - Work Hours and Overtime Policy.

   3. If a member is needed to respond to an active emergency, the member will make every reasonable effort to respond. The member and the coordinators will keep supervisors, affected Troop/Region Officers and affected Division Directors informed.

   4. Member participation in all preplanned activities must be preapproved. The member is responsible for making appropriate and timely requests for approval to attend from their supervisor and for completing any required travel requests. Coordinators are responsible for gaining all required approvals from the Troop/Region Commanders and Command Staff. The coordinators and administrator are responsible for activity planning; gaining budget and management approvals and seeing that appropriate orders are generated.