CISM

Critical Incident Stress Management

PRESENTED BY
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INTRODUCTIONS

SARAH GRAMPP

- 2002 - 2006 United States Air Force
- 2007 Began FAA Career at Chicago Center
- 2009 Started with the NATCA CISM Team
- 2013 Transferred to Kansas City Center
- 2016 Began Coordinator Role
- 2019 Took on co-lead position to work with the Team Lead to help manage the Team
- 2020 Became Team Lead
- 2023 Co-Trainer for new D.R. CISM Team
- Currently in process becoming Instructor certified

What is CISM

- Peer-to-Peer. Air Traffic Controllers with specialized training in acute stress mitigation.

- Trained annually and certified through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).

- Work side-by-side with contracted counselors trained in CISM during official event responses.

- A confidential, non-judgmental, and unbiased resource for anyone covered under the CBA.

- Bound by confidentiality: No records. No reporting*.

Why have a CISM Team?

- Studies have proven that peer to peer support teams are highly effective at facilitating the return to normal functioning for those affected by a critical incident.

- Built in support
- Help with managing the effects
- Feeling better sooner

Peer to Peer Support
Why does it work so well?

- Air Traffic Control is highly specialized and unique
- A peer can speak the language and often have immediate access to the affected person.
- Confidential
- Being able to help someone requires trust
- Because peers are professional colleagues, there is often instant rapport
- RAPPORT = TRUST = EFFECTIVENESS

The CISM Team Product

- One-on-one support within hours of the critical incident. (Defusing) This can also be done with several people at once if possible

- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

- Short-term follow-up

What is a Critical Incident?

- A critical incident is an abnormal event that evokes an acute stress response that diminishes coping skills or normal functioning. While mostly work related, sometimes non-work events can create a similar acute stress reaction.

- Common post-event symptoms
  - preoccupation with the event / flashbacks
  - the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep
  - loss of appetite
  - Hypervigilance

Examples of Critical Incidents

- General aviation aircraft accident with fatalities and direct air traffic control involvement. (Tower controller)

- In-flight emergencies involving the radar environment

- Other situations include…

More Critical Incidents

- Near mid-air collisions or runway incursions

- Employee death on or off the job

- Natural disasters such as hurricane, tornado, earthquake or wildfires (These require different handling)

- Any situation that evokes a response consistent with critical incident stress

Peer Support Responses

- Most critical incidents are acute in nature.

- Immediate support from the CISM Team helps people prepare for how the event may disrupt their daily life and routine. (Defusing)

- If several people are involved in an incident then a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) may be scheduled

Defusing

- Almost always done one-on-one and follows a specific format

- Almost always done over the phone within 24 hours but best before the end of the day that the incident occurs

- The responding team member can begin to assess the need for further response by making this contact

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)
Always a group activity

- In response to an aviation incident/accident where multiple (3 or more) controllers are involved

- Structured confidential group discussion designed to help with any ongoing symptoms. The discussion is formatted to a seven step process. Peers are trained to facilitate this discussion format

CISD (continued)

- Usually conducted at or near the local ATC facility 2-7 days after the event.

- Conducted by peer AND a mental health professional working as a team. Peers take the lead, counselors support the process.

- Closed door private and confidential session for those controllers with direct involvement.

- Some organizations mandate participation. More on that later.

How does a CISM Team actually work? Roles for an effective Team

- Team Lead - The main gatekeeper and point of contact. This person must know what the team is doing at all times

- Coordinators - These people are responsible for following up on communications that indicate a possible critical incident and usually speak with any ATC that may be involved

- Peers - Everyone on the team is a peer. Peers are trained to work with controllers post-incident

Other Important Factors

- Having support from the top management of your ANSP or organization is critical. This will provide the needed support to create the necessary elements to start-up the CISM Team and keep it operational

- On the labor side, creation of the infrastructure for team operations is very important.

History of our Team

- 1989-Need for CISM recognized by Union after Sioux City Iowa Crash.

- Airlines, airport authority, EMS and other emergency responders had CISM programs already in place. The FAA did not.

- Team started in early 1990's with only Union support.

- 1994 FAA officially recognized team and CISM was added to the CBA.

- Team struggled off and on with full support until 9/11 happened.

- Today it's embedded in our culture.

How to Create a CISM Team

- Designation of an individual to serve as the primary point of contact for all decisions related to getting the CISM Team operational. These duties include:
  - Picking Team members
  - Creation of a central phone number/email
  - Education of entire workforce about the Team and the benefits of using it (pre-incident education)
  - Identify mental health professionals that can work in tandem with the Team
  - Identify a management counterpart for the program

AND THEN…

- GET YOUR TEAM MEMBERS TRAINED!

  - This should be the last thing that is done so the team may begin to function as soon as training is complete

THANK YOU

It has been a pleasure to share our experience with everyone. We stand with you ready to help.

Sarah Grampp