CISM Managers Guide

A Tool to Guide You through Magellan's CISM Process

Magellan HEALTHCARE

After a Critical Incident: a Manager's Guide

As a manager or supervisor, you play an important role in providing support to employees following a critical incident. During this time, your staff may experience a variety of changes in productivity and conduct. Employees will need emotional support and understanding, while you focus on maintaining stable work performance. How you respond to these demands is vital.

Call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

Reviewing the materials in this packet will help you anticipate and prepare for common employee responses to trauma and severe stress. As a manager, remember that you too are affected by stress in the workplace. We encourage you to use EAP resources for yourself as well.

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The "What" and "Why" of Critical Incident Stress Management

What is a "Critical Incident?"
A critical incident is an abnormal or traumatic event which has the potential to overwhelm ones usual coping mechanisms resulting in psychological distress and an impairment of normal functioning.

In the workplace, this might be an event that could result in deficits in employee conduct or productivity. Examples of critical incidents in the workplace include: suicide; homicide; robbery; assault; threats of violence; worksite accidents; industrial and natural disasters; and organizational changes like restructuring or reductions in force. Critical incidents may affect a few individuals or an entire company.

What is Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)?
CISM describes a wide array of services designed to support individuals who have experienced a critical incident. The CISM team at Magellan addresses those incidents that impact the workplace. Magellan offers a continuum of services that are based on factors such as incident type, degree of severity, and company needs.

What kind of CISM services does Magellan offer?
A broad range of CISM services are available through Magellan. Psychological First Aid (PFA), Management Consultations, and group and individual support to affected employees are the primary services utilized. In the days and weeks following a critical incident, Magellan also provides Clinical Follow-up services to gather feedback about service outcomes and offer assistance with any unresolved issues. Skilled intake clinicians are available for consultations 24 hours a day to assist you in identifying what services may be appropriate.

Why should I use CISM services?
Providing an immediate response to a trauma is designed to lessen the effects of the trauma and to identify individuals who may need additional support. Group or individual interventions allow employees to process feelings and concerns in a guided environment with a mental health professional. The confidential nature of the services provides an additional level of reassurance to employees who may be experiencing anxiety or stress in the workplace and are unsure about where to find resources and support. One constant

ROBBERY Circle of Impact EMPLOYEE DEATH Circle of Impact

Secure an appropriate meeting area: Find a room that is private and quiet. Arrange the chairs for an interactive meeting (if possible in a U-shape). Group sizes may vary, so be flexible. Flexibility is important because sometimes only individual sessions are possible. Sometimes there is no meeting room. Sometimes our counselors need to walk the worksite and sometimes a private spot nearby is utilized. The Magellan Team works with the company reps to problem solve any challenges the situation may present.

Encourage participation: Through written and verbal communication, encourage employees to attend. Employees are often concerned about whether attending a CISM service will be confidential and how it might impact their work. Assure employees that their participation is **voluntary** and let them know you have set aside time from their regular duties to attend.

What to Expect from a CISM Group Intervention

At the beginning of a group, the on-site counselor outlines what will happen. The counselor facilitates a discussion about the traumatic event and how it is affecting employees. The counselor focuses on helping employees to understand that their reactions and feelings are normal. The counselor provides reassurance that employees will recover. The counselor helps the employees to discuss their own natural resiliency and healing abilities. The counselor coaches employees on techniques and behaviors that will speed up their recovery. Employees are encouraged to participate at their own comfort level throughout the group.

The objectives of CISM groups are:

- to provide employees with an understanding of normal responses to abnormal events
- to equip employees with healthy coping skills
- to identify employees who may need additional or individual support
- to increase cohesion within a group following a critical event
- to decrease risk of developing further symptoms
- to return employees to their previous level of functioning in the workplace.

What to Expect from a CISM Individual Intervention

- Frequently the CISM Team serves clients who are not able to offer group sessions because of their business needs or group sessions would not be the most comfortable format for serving the employees at the site. Individual CISM services are often provided for our retail customers who simply cannot pull everyone off the floor for a group session. Individual CISM services are often provided in situations where the employee group would not feel comfortable talking in front of their peers (e.g. police, firemen).
- Individual CISM services have the advantage of being fully individually focused on each employee. Individual services allow the employee to be totally open and honest without making them feel vulnerable with their peers.
- Individual CISM services provide the same primary focus of normalizing the employees experience, reinforcing their natural resiliency, and providing coaching to speed up recovery.

If you have <u>any</u> concern about employee performance following a critical incident, consult your EAP Workplace Support Team. Magellan has specially trained clinicians available to work with managers, supervisors, and human resource personnel. Management consultations are included in your CISM services at no extra cost and are available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Key Issues Managers Face Following a Critical Incident

- **Work Performance**
  Employee work performance may be directly or indirectly affected by a critical incident. Temporarily taking a more tolerant approach may be helpful when dealing with employee schedules and time off requests.

- **Productivity**
  Productivity remains a key supervisory responsibility. Employees should be aware that the company expectation is for employees to resume previous performance levels. Managers need to be supportive and understanding while simultaneously keeping the business running. One of the most effective strategies is simply showing gratitude to employees for coming to work and doing the best they can.

- **High Levels of Emotion**
  During the first days following trauma employees may have crying spells, be highly distractible, be unusually irritable, or show other symptoms of distress. This is normal and improves quickly for most people. Managers should remain calm and supportive. Managers should consult with the EAP on employees who are not quickly recovering.

- **Limitations**
  Recognize your limits as a manager or supervisor. You are not expected to be a counselor or social worker for employees, but employees will look to their leadership for comfort and support. Remember that there is nothing more powerful than simple human kindness. Showing an interest in how employees are doing, basic listening, and simple encouragement go a long way. Focus on work performance by noticing and praising the return to productivity. For non-work related issues, refer employees to available resources, like EAP and mental health services.

Now What? Keeping It Simple

Address safety and physical needs first. If safety is an issue, assist employees in moving to a safe location as soon as possible.
Ensure employees' physical needs are met (e.g. food, water, tissues).

Be aware of common stress and trauma reactions. Anger, frustration, irritability, withdrawal, isolation, tearfulness, uncontrollable crying, shock, confusion, disorientation, denial, shaking,

dizziness, chest pain, other physical complaints. Managers can help by normalizing and reassuring. Make sure employees know that it is "normal" to have a lot of symptoms following high stress and trauma. Reassure them that people recover and they should expect to recover too.

Confirm your support. Remember that everyone responds to stress differently. Employees may experience many different feelings at the same time. Sometimes just being present is the most supportive thing you can do.
It's okay if you don't know the "right words" to say.

Don't try to fix the problem. The vast majority of employees recover all on their own through their own natural resiliency, so support their ability to survive and know what is best for them. There is often no satisfying explanation for what has happened. Don't try to explain or make sense out of a critical incident. Give information only if you are sure it has been verified. It is common in crisis situations for the "facts" to change and result in miscommunication and confusion.

Ensure practical resources are available for employees. If possible, offer employees a quiet area for making calls or taking a break. Allow flexibility with employee schedules and time-off. Employees may need time to arrange funeral services, run errands, and/or support family members. Have appropriate handouts available on related topics, such as coping with stress or dealing with grief. Provide the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) toll-free number to any employee who may need one-on-one assistance. Post the EAP toll-free number where all employees can see it. Encourage employees to rest and take time for personal activities.

Find time for yourself. Be aware of your own emotions and needs. You can only be of support to others if you have first attended to yourself.

The Grief Process

We normally associate grief with death. In the workplace, grief may be the result of a critical incident or traumatic event. Having a practical understanding of the grief process will enable you to better support your employees. It may take employees weeks, months or even longer to fully process their grief. Tears and sadness are the most commonly accepted expressions of grief. In reality, grief is much

more complex.

KEY ISSUES TO REMBER WHEN GRIEF COMES TO THE WORKPLACE:

- A lot has been published about the stages of grief but in reality we know that there are no set stages of grief that real people go through. Real people experience grief in endlessly different ways. Many people are very accepting of loss and will tend to have generally mild reactions to loss. Some people may go through identifiable stages of shock and denial, then anger, then acceptance, while others will feel overwhelmed with waves of many different feelings and reactions. Some people will grieve deeply but never show it at work while others may be clearly distraught at work. Some people will heal quickly and some may never totally heal. Be accepting of difference and encourage your employees to be accepting of each others grief process.

- When you want to provide support to a grieving employee, don't try to guess what they need, simply ask how you can help. The most common help that someone who is grieving needs is to talk and have a patient listener. It is very helpful for a grieving person to tell you how badly they feel and important that you remind yourself that it is not your job to cheer them up. When grief is severe, most of a person's support system will expect them to move on after a few months but the person may continue to need to talk, so being a patient listener at these times is particularly valuable.

- Employees who are grieving of course find it challenging to maintain their usual level of work performance. Work is important to recovery and an important source of meaning and continuity. With these employees make sure that you take time to notice their efforts. Make sure to praise them for coming to work and doing a good job despite struggling with feeling poorly.

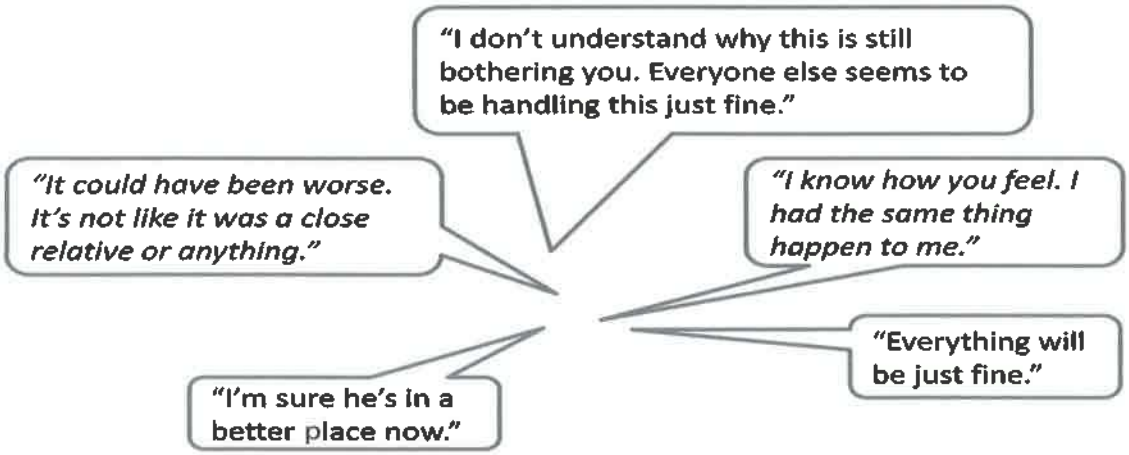
- When the workplace grief is due to the death of an employee, coach the coworkers on attending funeral services. Coworkers often experience high stress trying to think of what to say when they meet the family at funeral services. Coach coworkers that just being present means a lot and simply saying "I'm sorry" is enough. Coach coworkers that the greatest gift they can give the family is to share work stories. Families rarely get to hear about the person's work life and work stories and memories are usually treasured by the family. Help the work group find ways to communicate these work memories in the days and weeks following the loss.

What Do I Say? Basic Communication Skills

As a manager or supervisor, you will be expected to support employees following a critical incident. You may worry that you will say "the wrong thing" in these circumstances. Your presence and compassion are the most important resources during this time. The following is a list of basic supportive communication skills to guide you in talking with employees.

- Use accurate language. When referring to a death, for example, use died rather than a euphemism such as passed away.
- Expect employees to talk about the event and their reactions and feelings to it.
- Familiarize yourself with the basics of the grieving process and how it can affect an employee's worklife. Examples include attendance issues, forgetfulness, irritability, and decreased productivity. Be prepared to support the employee returning to normal productivity
- Know when to refer an employee for professional help. This may be based on observed changes in behavior or from concerns the employee brings directly to you.
- Make EAP and other resources easily available through EAP and brochures.
- Respect employee confidentiality – regardless of whether the details of a critical incident are widely known or the media have gotten involved.
- Respect cultural and social diversity among your employees. This is particularly important in times of crisis, when employees are more likely to talk about their personal values and beliefs.
- Avoid statements that, although well intended, may devalue an employee's experiences or feelings. (See "Phrases to Avoid" below.)

Phrases to Avoid



When You Get The Call . . .

- Get information about the situation.
- Address safety and physical needs.
- Be supportive. Just listening is often the most supportive thing you can do.
- Be available.
- Use accurate language.
- Use a gentle, calm tone of voice.
- Expect chaos.
- Encourage employees to express grief.
- Be flexible.
- Recognize your limits. You are not expected to be a therapist for employees.
- Find time for yourself.
- Refer to EAP or other community resources.
- Report all threats of violence to appropriate authorities.
- Respect employee confidentiality.

☏ Respect cultural diversity.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at www.MagellanHealth.com/member. Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.