


POLICY 401.0	CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING TEAM (CISD) AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	
	NEW: 06/01, 02/18	RELATED POLICIES:
	CFA STANDARDS:	REVIEWED: AS NEEDED

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline this agency’s response to personnel who, as a result of responding to or becoming involved in a critical incident, may be in need of peer counseling or mental health services. The duties and responsibilities of the law enforcement profession are often emotionally demanding and difficult, and employees generally risk experiencing stress and related emotional difficulties. Emotional problems may have a negative impact on personnel performance, and in extreme instances, may present a danger to the welfare and safety of employees, their families or the general public. Therefore, it is the policy of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department to provide all personnel with access to peer counseling and/or mental health services to help them preempt and resolve emotional difficulties and, under emergency conditions, take those measures necessary in the provision of mental health services to ensure the well-being and safety of employees and the general public.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **Critical Incident:** Any situation, which has such profound emotional impact that it has the potential to interfere with an employee’s ability to function.
2. **Peer Debriefing:** Peer debriefers shall be authorized by this agency to provide voluntary counseling services to agency employees only after having successfully completed this agency’s prescribed course of instruction. Peer debriefers must receive a minimum eight (8) hours of approved training with bi-annual updates.
3. **Defusing:** A brief discussion between involved employees and a peer debriefer immediately following a critical incident. It is used to restore involved employee’s cognitive functioning and prepare them for future stress reactions resulting from the incident. Peer debriefers will not discuss details of the event with the employee as they are not covered under legal confidentiality guidelines and it would not be considered privileged information.
4. **Debriefing:** A confidential meeting between employees involved in a critical incident and a CISD team, usually following a defusing. This meeting can be on an individual or group basis. It is used to inform and educate involved employees on stress management techniques. **It is not an operational critique;** rather the focus is on assisting the employee or group with coping behaviors and techniques.
5. **Mental Health Professional:** A licensed professional, departmentally authorized social or mental health caseworker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist. When a mental health professional is present at either a defusing or

debriefing, confidentiality guidelines do apply and all statements are considered privileged.

6. **Team Coordinator(s):** Performs administrative duties of the CISD team and manages its operation. The Chief of Police or his designee will select the CISD Team Coordinator(s). The Team Coordinator(s) will report directly to the Assistant Chief of Investigations or his designee while performing the duties of this role.

C. CISD TEAM GUIDELINES

1. **Team Meetings:** All members shall meet quarterly to discuss mutual issues and concerns, review team activities and update any training as needed. The CISD Team Coordinator(s) facilitates this meeting.
2. The Critical Incident Team is not an investigative unit. It shall be the duty and obligation of the CISD Team members to maintain strict confidentiality in matters involving emotional, financial or personal concerns of CISD participants. Any discussion with a member of the CISD Team will remain confidential. A breach of this confidentiality will result in removal from the CISD Team and possible disciplinary action.
3. Members of the CISD Team who are also employees of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department have certain legal obligations. Team members may become aware of information during the CISD process that may not remain confidential. Exceptions to the confidentiality rule of CISD are:
 - a. There is a reason to believe a participant presents a danger to himself or others.
 - b. There is a reason to believe a participant has committed or anticipates committing a criminal offense.
4. Officers who have been involved in a violation of law or their oath of office shall not rely upon nor expect peer counseling to serve as a means of relieving or diminishing their real or perceived responsibility. Exceptions to the confidentiality rule will be clearly stated to the participants prior to the beginning of a debriefing process.
5. CISD members having knowledge of one of the exceptions will not discuss the matter but will immediately contact the CISD Coordinator or their designee for direction.
6. It will be the policy of the Department not to question CISD Team members for the facts surrounding a critical incident defusing or debriefing or the individual involved.

D. ORGANIZATION OF A CISD TEAM

The CISD Team may include representatives from all bureaus. Peer team members will be selected through mutual agreement with the team guidelines and upon successful completion of the peer training.

E. CISD TEAM ACTIVATION

1. It shall be the responsibility of a shift Lieutenant and/or scene supervisor, through the Communications Division, to notify a CISD Team Coordinator(s) immediately of the following types of incidents:
 - a. Suicide of a member or employee
 - b. Any police related shooting
 - c. Any mass casualty incidents or natural disaster (i.e. plane crash, hurricane, tornado)
 - d. Death or severe injury to a child
 - e. Any other incidents in which the circumstances were so unusual or the sights and sounds so distressing as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction
 - f. Death of an inmate
 - g. Riot
 - h. Hostage situation
2. It shall be the responsibility of the Team Coordinator(s) to provide the FLPD Teletype/Records Unit with an updated roster of CISD members.
3. When possible, the CISD Team members should avoid direct involvement in the incident.
4. When any member of the CISD Team is requested by the proper authority to respond to a CISD callout during non-scheduled working hours, that member will be compensated on an overtime basis.

F. DEBRIEFING

1. It shall be responsibility of the Team Coordinator(s), in conjunction with the on scene supervisor, to determine if a debriefing and/or defusing is needed and when they will take place.
2. Any member or employee of the department can initiate a debriefing by contacting a CISD Team Coordinator(s).

3. Only those members involved in the Critical Incident will be permitted to attend the debriefing and/or defusing.

G. CHAPLAIN

The Chaplain is a resource available to all employees and can be included in the training/activities of the Team at the request of the Coordinator(s).

H. ACCESS PROCEDURE

1. The name and telephone number of peer debriefers and their availability shall be posted for the benefit of all employees. A team roster shall be developed and maintained by the Team Coordinator(s). A copy shall be provided to the Communications Center. The Team Coordinator(s) shall be responsible for administering and supervising the program and assuring that services are available on a reasonable basis to all agency employees.
2. Agency employees may voluntarily seek the assistance of a peer counselor at any time.
3. Peer counselors may be used to assist officers and their families in cases of job-related crises through informal counseling and support and through referral to professional mental health service providers where necessary.
4. Employees should use peer counselors as a referral source where appropriate and may, with or without anonymity, provide the name of a fellow officer or employee for discreet and confidential intervention.
5. Strict confidentiality shall be maintained between the peer counselor and the employee. Other than the noted exceptions, nothing discussed between counseling participants shall be divulged to any third party without the express written consent of the employee.
6. As an alternative to peer counseling, employees are encouraged to contact the City Employee Assistance Program, a police chaplain, their personal clergy, physicians or mental health professionals when deemed necessary for resolving emotional crises.

I. PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1. Mental health service providers are available to all employees of this agency and their families through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or as allowed by insurance coverage. Use of these services shall be treated in the same manner as any other work-related illness or disability.
2. The services of mental health professionals may be invoked by employee self-referral, referral by a supervisor, through the Office of the Chief or by policy following life-threatening, traumatic experiences.

3. Supervisory personnel are responsible for continuously monitoring personnel performance and behavior and shall be alert to behavioral indicators that suggest emotional problems. These include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Uncharacteristic or repeated citizen complaints, particularly those related to excessive force;
 - b. Abrupt changes in prescribed employee response or behavior such as excessive tardiness, absenteeism, abnormal impatience, irritability or aggressiveness, or repeated instances of overreaction or failure to act in the line of duty;
 - c. Irrational or bizarre thoughts or actions,
 - d. Unexplained changes in work habits or patterns of leave usage;
 - e. Erratic mood swings; and
 - f. Indications of alcohol or drug abuse.
4. Supervisory personnel who observe or receive information regarding the above types of behavior shall consult with the employee for an explanation and, where necessary, may confer with peer counselors, managers or mental health professionals for guidance.
5. Where circumstances indicate, the supervisor shall suggest a voluntary self-referral to the employee. Where emotional impairment/dysfunction is suspected, either prior to or following these consultations, supervisory personnel shall determine whether an administrative referral to mental health professionals is warranted.
6. Under emergency conditions, when an employee's behavior constitutes a significant danger to themselves or others, a supervisor may order a direct and immediate referral for mental health evaluation. A mental health professional, who is not part of the CISD Team, shall be contacted for instructions prior to the referral and transportation shall be provided for the employee. The Criminal Investigations Division Captain shall also be advised to evaluate the need to activate the Threat Assessment Team.
7. In instances where supervisory personnel believe that an employee is experiencing serious or debilitating emotional or psychological problems, they shall direct that the employee be interviewed by an agency-authorized mental health service provider.
 - a. A written copy of the referral order shall be forwarded to the employee, to the mental health service provider and to the Chief of Police.
 - b. Any personnel involved shall take all necessary steps to ensure the confidentiality of the referral order. Any release of information regarding

the referral to anyone shall only be made with the approval of the employee's Bureau Assistant Chief.

8. The mental health professional shall
 - a. Maintain the confidentiality of all communications concerning the referral and its findings;
 - b. Acknowledge receipt of the order and advise whether the officer responded; and
 - c. Advise the Chief of Police or his designee of the officer's fitness for duty and provide recommendations for assignment.
9. Following the mental health assessment, an employee may be returned to the original duty assignment, reassigned to alternative duty, placed on temporary light duty or placed on administrative leave as deemed appropriate.
 - a. An employee's work status shall be reevaluated every 10 days while under the care of a mental health professional or until such care has been terminated.
 - b. An employee may be returned to regular duty, his work assignment may be modified or he may be temporarily or permanently relieved from duty at any time in accordance with recommendations of the mental health professional.
 - c. Reinstatement to regular duty of any employee requires the affirmative recommendation of an agency-authorized psychologist/psychiatrist.
10. Job security and promotional opportunities shall not be jeopardized by an employee solely for having participated in psychological counseling services. However, failure to seek treatment to correct deficiencies in job performance may reduce or eliminate promotional consideration or jeopardize continued employment.