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## Critical Incident Stress Response Team

### 348.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Critical Incident Stress Response (CISR) Program is to provide all employees with the opportunity for peer assistance during times of professional crisis. The CISR service program does not act as a replacement for professional mental health services, should they be deemed necessary. The San Leandro Department will follow the model developed by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).

### 348.2 POLICY

The San Leandro Police Department recognizes that Emergency Services personnel will be exposed to traumatic events over the course of their careers. It will be the policy of the San Leandro Police Department to continually strive to meet the industry standard of care regarding the mental health and emotional well-being of its employees following a traumatic event.

### 348.3 DEFINITIONS

**Traumatic Event** - Directly experiencing or witnessing actual or threatened death or serious injury or experiencing a threat to one's own physical integrity or the physical integrity of someone else. Any event that may temporarily overwhelm an individual's usual methods of coping or produce unusual strong reactions.

**Individual Reactions to a Traumatic Event** - It is important to note an individual's reaction to a traumatic event is individual-specific based on the totality of circumstances in that individual's life (i.e., the degree of involvement, cumulative events, personal likeness, children, etc.).

**International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF)** - ICISF is a worldwide organization dedicated to the prevention and mitigation of disabling stress through education, training, and support services for all emergency services professions.

**Critical Incident Stress Response (CISR) Team** - A partnership between mental health professionals and emergency services employees who are interested in preventing and mitigating the negative impact of acute stress on them and their peers.

**CISR Team Member** - An employee trained to provide psychological first aid, support, and referrals for employees of the San Leandro Police Department. Also referred to as peer support.

**CISR Team Coordinators** - One, or more, Sergeant(s) appointed by the Team Liaison and/or Chief of Police who coordinates team training, deploys our trauma response, communicates with our mental health professional, tracks follow-up services, and other administrative duties related to our CISR Team.

**Team Liaison** - A Lieutenant, appointed by the Chief of Police, as the primary liaison between the CISR Team, the mental health professional, and management staff. The Team Liaison will be responsible for the team budget, authorizing overtime when necessary, and approving team deployment in extraordinary circumstances.

# San Leandro Police Department

San Leandro PD Policy Manual

## *Critical Incident Stress Response Team*

---

**Mental Health Professional** - A licensed mental health professional who has specific expertise, experience, education, and training in the field of trauma services with special emphasis on police personnel.

**CISD - Critical Incident Stress Debriefings, Defusings and/or Demobilizations:** Different types of meetings designed to mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event, prevent the subsequent development of a post-traumatic stress disorder, and serve as an early identification mechanism for individuals who may require professional mental health follow-up. Debriefings, Defusings, and Demobilizations are structured group meetings or discussions during which personnel are given an opportunity to discuss their thoughts and reactions concerning a traumatic event in a controlled environment under the directions of a mental health professional and peer support personnel.

**Debriefing** - The debriefing is a seven-phase process that should be conducted within 72 hours of the traumatic event. The debriefing usually lasts two to three hours depending on the number of participants. **It is not a critique of Police Department operations at the incident. Performance issues will not be discussed during the debriefing.**

**Defusing** - A shortened version of the debriefing, generally lasting less than one hour. A defusing is a three-phase process that should take place as soon as possible after the traumatic event (usually within eight hours). The defusing may be used to determine the need for debriefing and/or other services.

**Demobilization** - A brief informational session applied when operational units have been released from service at a major incident/disaster that requires unusually large numbers of personnel or lengthy periods of deployment. It serves a secondary function as a screening opportunity to assure that individuals who may need assistance are identified early after a traumatic event.

**Peer Assistance** - A process by which trained personnel provide emotional support and referrals for a colleague during a crisis or when they are under stress. Generally, peer assistance is sought by the employee in need, or suggested by the employee's peer(s) or supervisor. Peer assistance does not replace the need for structured group intervention following trauma. Peer assistance or support is a necessary adjunct to professional mental health guidance and leadership in trauma support services. Peer assistance is not a replacement for the Department's contracted Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** - The City of San Leandro's Employee Assistance Program is a consulting/counseling service for a variety of personal issues, other than traumatic event experience in the line of duty.

### **348.4 PROCEDURE**

The standard of care includes, but is not limited to the following:

- (a) Pre-incident and continued traumatic stress education;
- (b) Critical Incident Stress Response Team;

# San Leandro Police Department

San Leandro PD Policy Manual

## *Critical Incident Stress Response Team*

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- (c) Peer Assistance;
- (d) Referral to professional counseling;
- (e) Critical Incident Stress Debriefings and other group interventions following a traumatic event;
- (f) Significant other and family support services;
- (g) On-scene support services;
- (h) Follow-up services after critical incident interventions;
- (i) Other support services as required.

### **348.5 TEAM COMPOSITION**

The San Leandro Police Critical Incident Stress Response (CISR) Team is comprised of personnel who have personal experience in police-related traumatic incidents and specialized training in assisting peers and their families with the immediate adverse psychological effects following a traumatic event.

- (a) CISR Team Members understand that being a member is voluntary and must be prepared to answer calls for help on a 24-hour basis.
- (b) One of the most important responsibilities of a CISR Team Member is the promotion of trust, anonymity, and confidentiality. Therefore, communications between a CISR Team Member and an employee being assisted is considered privileged by the Department unless criminal acts are involved; or where the employee, through words or actions, manifests that there is a clear and present danger to him/herself, citizen(s), or fellow employees.
- (c) CISR Team Members have no legally-protected privilege of patient confidentiality as far as court testimony, so Team Members shall not make or maintain any notes regarding their communications.
- (d) A violation of confidentiality, except as mandated, will be grounds for immediate dismissal from the Critical Incident Stress Response Team. The CISR Coordinators, the Team Liaison, the mental health professional and/or the Chief of Police will be responsible for making this determination.

### **348.6 INITIATION OF TRAUMA INTERVENTION**

Trauma takes a variety of forms and cannot be accurately or exhaustively quantified in description. However, certain events are of such magnitude that they should be considered disruptive to nearly anyone involved. For purposes of the San Leandro Police Department response criteria, those incidents are defined as follows:

- (a) Line of duty death;
- (b) Serious line of duty injury;
- (c) Suicide of San Leandro Police Department employee;
- (d) Traumatic off-duty employee death;

# San Leandro Police Department

San Leandro PD Policy Manual

## *Critical Incident Stress Response Team*

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- (e) Disaster;
- (f) Multi-casualty incidents;
- (g) Police shootings;
- (h) Incidents resulting in death or serious injury to a citizen that is proximately caused by a Police employee.

If the defusing or debriefing is for an incident described above (a - h) attendance will be required for those involved.

When such incidents occur, an automatic Trauma Response will be initiated. The Supervisor/ Watch Commander will see that a CISR Team Member is notified. The mental health professional will be contacted immediately following any of the above-defined incidents. The need for group intervention or immediate peer support will be accessed and mobilized.

When making the notification, the Supervisor/Watch Commander should attempt to utilize an on-duty CISR Team Member or Coordinator. If no CISR Team Members are on-duty, there will be a notification protocol and list of CISR Team Members for call-out in New World.

Additional events that may warrant group trauma intervention and CISR Team call-out include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Significant events involving children;
- (b) When the victim of a serious crime or accident is a known relative of the employee;
- (c) When there is excessive, negative media interest displaying the employee(s) in a disruptive way;
- (d) Any significant event other than those listed above, where the Supervisor or CISR Team Member feels the employee(s) will benefit from CISD;
- (e) In the unlikely event that the Supervisor and Team Member disagree as to whether or not a group trauma intervention is warranted, a CISR Coordinator and/or mental health professional will be notified and will make the determination. In any event, when an employee requests intervention, that request will be granted.

If the defusing or debriefing is for an incident described above (a - e) attendance will be voluntary.

This program is dependent upon the identification of all critical incidents, large and small, to help reduce the emotional impact and to avoid the effects of post-traumatic stress.

The CISR debriefing or defusing should include any sworn and/or civilian Police personnel directly involved in the incident. In any event, active participation in the discussion is not a requirement. Anyone not directly involved in the incident, including the Supervisor and/or Managers of the employees(s) may not attend the CISR debriefing/defusing process.

Research has shown there is a "1/3 guideline" to be considered when assessing how personnel may be affected by a traumatic event. Essentially, 1/3 of personnel will not be affected, 1/3 will be moderately affected and 1/3 will be significantly affected. Although a non-affected employee may be required to attend a mandatory CISD, the purpose is to make certain someone's needs are

# San Leandro Police Department

San Leandro PD Policy Manual

## *Critical Incident Stress Response Team*

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not overlooked or missed. More importantly, employees are reminded the non- or moderately-affected employee(s) may have vital information/perspective that could help a fellow employee better understand an incident and thus be able to help his/her peers.

### **348.7 CISR TEAM MEMBER SELECTION CRITERIA/PROCESS**

- (a) The team will be comprised of sworn and civilian personnel, representing a variety of employee groups in the organization.
- (b) Team Members must be off probation and not the subject of any on-going disciplinary investigation/action.
- (c) Due to the sensitivity of the position and their functions, additional Team Members (when deemed necessary) can be nominated by the membership of the existing team. Police personnel may also submit a memorandum to the Team Coordinators, Team Liaison, mental health professional and/or the Chief of Police expressing an interest in becoming a member of the San Leandro Police CISR Team. In addition, members of the San Leandro Police Department may nominate other personnel for addition to the team.
- (d) All qualified candidates will then be selected as outlined in the Promotional and Lateral Transfer Policy.
- (e) Due to the sensitivity and training involved, CISR Team Members will remain on the team indefinitely unless they violate confidentiality as outlined above in V., Section D. CISR Team Members may also submit a resignation memorandum to the Chief of Police, Team Liaison, or one of the Team Coordinators.
- (f) The CISR Team Liaison will be the only management representative on the San Leandro Police CISR Team. They will not only serve as the Team Administrator, but after completion of the Basic CISM Course, may be available for CISD services for other Department managers and administrators. Except under extraordinary circumstances, the Team Liaison will not participate in CISD services for non-management employees of the San Leandro Police Department, unless requested to do so by the mental health professional. If requested, the Team Liaison may participate in CISD services for other law enforcement agencies.

### **348.8 TRAINING**

- (a) The success of the CISR Team serving our employees, and the well-being of the individual Team Members in general, are dependent on the same training criteria afforded other specialty teams such as canine and SWAT. As such, the CISR Team training will consist of the following:
  - 1. The CISR Coordinators, with the assistance of the mental health professional, will be responsible for determining the training needs of the CISR Team, and scheduling initial and continued training;
  - 2. The initial training shall include the approved Basic CISM Course;
  - 3. Continuing education should take place on an ongoing basis and include intermediate and advanced CISM courses and workshops, as well as in-house

# San Leandro Police Department

San Leandro PD Policy Manual

## *Critical Incident Stress Response Team*

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training by our mental health professional and/or appropriate guest speakers/trainers.

### **348.9 RESCINDED POLICY**

This policy rescinds San Leandro Operations Directive 10-04.