

Response to a Critical Incident in the Workplace

www.cseas.per.gov.ie



What is a Critical Incident?

A **Critical Incident** is defined as an event out of the range of normal experience – one which is sudden and unexpected and may have a physical or emotional impact. In some cases it may involve the perception of a threat to life. Critical incidents are challenging events that have the potential to create significant distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms. It is important to provide prompt effective support to those affected by a traumatic/critical incident. Early and appropriate support can help reduce the adverse effects of the event and minimise the possibility of further problems developing at a later stage. Critical incidents in the workplace may include:

- death/serious injury
- assault
- personal threat
- robbery/fire/accident in the workplace
- fraud

What is Critical Incident Stress Management?

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a systematic approach to managing critical incidents.

It includes:

- assessment of the incident
- identifying type of response/support needed
- how it will be provided
- follow-up support where required

Goals of a critical incident response?

- mitigate impact of event (lower tension)
- facilitate recovery processes in those who are having normal reactions to abnormal events
- restoration of work environment to regular routine
- identify staff needing support during or after a critical incident

Responsibility of a line manager

A line manager has knowledge of his/her staff and the organisation which is vital. Your role in supporting your staff will be very important should a critical incident occur in the workplace. The nomination of a senior manager who can convey accurate information about the incident and outline plans to address the situation can:

- reduce anxiety
- quash rumours
- re-establish a sense of order

Remember, managers can also be affected by the incident. CSEAS support is available to you.

Practical support immediately after the event:

- provide tea, coffee, water (no alcohol)
- keep those affected by the event together to talk about what has happened and support each other
- help with practical arrangements such as transport home or contacting a family member (when appropriate)

Social support immediately after the event:

- provide factual information – this avoids misinformation/speculation/gossip occurring
- speak with staff to acknowledge what has happened
- recognise the efforts of staff in the situation

Government Departments/Offices may have individual protocols in place – these should be followed. You may also avail of the support and guidance of the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS).

On-duty EAO available at 0818 008120

Monday – Thursday: 9am – 5.15pm

Friday: 9am – 5pm

**Appointments are available evening
and weekends if required**

Email: cseas@per.gov.ie

www.cseas.per.gov.ie

Response to a Critical Incident in the Workplace

www.cseas.per.gov.ie

CSEAS provision of CISM support

Employee Assistance Officers (EAOs) in the CSEAS are trained in CISM and are available to provide a collaborative response with Government Departments/Offices when requested. Personnel Officers, line managers or a relevant nominated person may request the assistance of the CSEAS in the provision of this service. He/she should provide all necessary details as outlined below:

- situation/event requiring CSEAS support
- location, name and telephone number of the line manager in the area of the incident
- when CSEAS support is required
- number of staff affected

The CSEAS will:

- arrange for an EAO, or team of EAOs, to respond
- liaise with the Personnel Officer, line manager or nominated officer
- determine in collaboration with them the appropriate type of response, having assessed the critical incident and circumstances involved

The relevant Government Department/Office will:

- provide suitable accommodation/facilities for the CSEAS support team

The CSEAS support team can offer assistance in:

- small group setting
- large group setting
- one-to-one meetings
- follow-up support and referral

The relevant response will focus on the needs of the individual/group rather than the actual event.

The CSEAS support team will:

- facilitate understanding of the incident and discussion
- identify personal coping skills/stress management techniques to empower individuals
- identify external support/coping resources - encourage utilisation of resources
- provide short-term support to the individual or group

Feedback

When requested by a Department/Office to provide a critical incident response the following feedback will be given:

Group setting

A list of the attendees and relevant feedback as agreed by the group will be given to line manager/HR.

One-to-one meetings

Where an individual attends one-to-one meetings confirmation of his/her attendance and engagement with the CSEAS will be given to the line manager/HR as appropriate. If requested by the individual, feedback can be given to his/her line manager/HR.

Follow-up support and referral

Employee Assistance Officers will offer follow-up support meetings if required. Where it is deemed that individuals require additional external support, e.g. counselling, this is a matter for the individual Government Department/Office concerned.

General confidentiality guidelines

Confidentiality is between the client and the CSEAS. Information and personal data disclosed by employees to the CSEAS remain confidential (exceptions are listed below) and will not be disclosed to a third party outside of the CSEAS without the prior knowledge and consent of the individual.

This is in keeping with normal professional standards in relation to confidentiality

Exceptions to confidentiality are:

- life-threatening situations to the individual, other parties or the public
- where there is a statutory responsibility to report
- where required by a court or legal process to do so
- where non-disclosure of information could compromise the CSEAS
- where the CSEAS becomes aware of a possible breach in criminal law, disclosure may be necessary

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (HQ)
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
4th Floor, St. Stephen's Green House,
Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2, DO2 PH42, Ireland
Tel: 0818 008120

Email: cseas@per.gov.ie
www.cseas.per.gov.ie