



## CISM OVERVIEW: THE HOW

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Peer Support is **Comprehensive**. It covers the entire scope of a psychological crisis from pre-incident education, during the time of impact, to post-incident intervention and education, to the recovery/referral process. CISM **Integrates** within the overall continuum of care. It is not a stand-alone program or resource but rather works in concert with other existing supports and resources. Interventions are integrated within one another and are not used as stand-alone techniques since they all build on one another. CISM is **Systematic**. Each intervention is phase-sensitive and works with the timing of the incident and the effects of the exposure. CISM is a **Multi-Component** (Components 1-6) approach. It involves surveillance and assessment techniques to inform the peer team what interventions may be useful for the peer group. Some interventions can reach individuals affected. Other interventions can reach larger mixed groups and other interventions that can cover smaller groups like teams, crews, platoons, or task forces.

### CISM Team Operational Activities:

1. Peers start with building **resistance** through pre-incident education. Peers teach their colleagues how to recognize the signs and symptoms of distress in themselves and each other—giving information about stress management and how to access external resources and services available to them through their organization and communities.
2. When their colleagues experience a critical incident, the first thing peers do in response is to use their **surveillance** skills to assess the critical incident's impact on those involved. We are looking for signs and symptoms of distress and any change in the individual or group's usual activities, performance, or communication.
3. Once we have made a full **assessment**, we can formulate a **strategic plan** using the **5 Ts: Theme, Target, Type, Timing, and Team**. The strategic plan will answer the who, what, where, why, when, and how of crisis intervention tactics.
4. Most interventions we use in Peer Support are **individual interventions** such as the **SAFER-R**. We start with individual interventions to **immediately** support those showing signs of need and help us gain a better assessment of the themes of **impact** the event has had on those involved. The ongoing assessment will inform peers on appropriate next steps. Maybe an **informational group intervention**, such as a **CMB**, is required to fill in the gaps of information about the incident and remind personnel how to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and how to cope with that stress effectively. A CMB aims to control the spread of rumours and mitigate stress reactions. Peers would continue with more individual interventions and assess the need for an **interactive group intervention** such as a **Defusing** or **CISD** to reduce stress reactions and restore group cohesion of a team or unit.

Finally, peers **follow up** with everyone they provide interventions to and assess whether those individuals have **recovered** adaptive functioning or require a **referral** to formal mental health or other continued care services appropriate for their specific needs.