

CISM OVERVIEW: THE WHAT

Peer Support is a frontline service providing a safety net using all six core components of the ICISF model of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Peer Support.



This safety net can improve the system by increasing **resistance** to the psychological effects of trauma and **resiliency** by equipping personnel with the skills to rebound from these effects and restore adaptive functioning. More public safety personnel will remain healthy, resulting in a reduction of lost time. A case example of an established peer support program demonstrates the cost savings in the first year (SCES, 2017).

A CISM peer support program positioned on the full continuum of care, linked to other supports and services, ensures that multiple access points can meet needs. CISM can complement the different forms of support and resources offered within an organization. CISM can also be an effective conduit for facilitating referrals to continued care for some individuals who otherwise would never accept treatment (Parad & Parad, 1968; 2016). Peer support can address social isolation and break down the stigma that interferes with the **recovery** process (PSACC, 2016).

CISM is a term that refers to a comprehensive, integrative, strategic planning system complete with a multitude of crisis intervention tactics. A wide array of crisis intervention techniques assures that the continuum of supports will address and meet the needs of most public safety personnel and limit any “falling through the cracks.” Organizations can tailor a CISM Peer Support Program to provide acute crisis intervention with individuals, interventions with small groups of those directly affected, or interventions with large groups of those indirectly affected.

Effective CISM programs require:

1. Delivery of **resiliency** training to proactively boost psychological immunity.
2. Ongoing **assessment**, surveillance, and psychological triage.
3. Ongoing **strategic planning**.
4. Proficiency using various interventions (**individual, informational groups, and interactive groups**).

Peers support a person in crisis as they search for their inner coping strategies through simple tasks, quick contacts, innovative techniques, practical suggestions, and comfortable environments. Peers provide **proximal** peer-to-peer interactions, the **immediacy** of access to supports, and the **expectancy** of reasonable positive outcomes (Everly & Mitchell, 2016).