



**THE
BERRIEN COUNTY
CRITICAL
INCIDENT
STRESS
MANAGEMENT
TEAM**

Call Dispatch at: 269-925-2141

Registered Member
Michigan Crisis Response Association
International Critical Incident Stress Foundation

HISTORY

The *Berrien County Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team* was created in 1991 and became incorporated in 1994. Berrien County CISM was formed in response to the need for mental health support following critical incidents among our emergency service professionals.

Research and the experiences gained from the response to the September 11th attacks, the response to the crash of Flight 255, and other less dramatic community crises, have made it clear that emergency first responders can be helped to manage their stress reactions following events such as these.

Berrien County CISM is a cooperative team effort of trained individuals that include personnel from law enforcement, fire services, emergency medical teams, clergy and mental health agencies throughout Berrien County.

The services provided by Berrien County CISM team are based on the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing/Management Model developed by Dr. Jeffrey T. Mitchell.

MISSION

Berrien County CISM team's mission is to provide an integrated, comprehensive, multi-component crisis intervention system for emergency service personnel in Berrien County.

To fulfill this mission the team will:

- Maintain and provide a CISM team that will provide support services to emergency service personnel at the scene or after exposure to a critical incident.
- Provide educational and preventative stress management interventions to emergency service personnel and community organizations.
- Develop a resource and referral network to assist those emergency service providers in need of additional support.
- Develop a CISM crisis response plan that will assist the County's Emergency Management Organization.
- Provide education and support programs to the families of emergency service providers.

Berrien County CISM team will accomplish this mission in a manner which respects the autonomy of each emergency service organization and the need for each organization to be in control of its own recovery.

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

Critical incidents are any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions in emergency service personnel that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally either at the incident scene or later when the event is over. Exposure to such horrific events may lead to strong emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioral and spiritual stress reactions (aftershocks) that are very common and quite normal.

These stress reactions may appear immediately after the traumatic event, sometimes a few hours or a few days later, and in some cases, weeks or months later. The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. Some of these signs and symptoms may include headaches, fatigue, chest pain, nightmares, poor problem solving or decision making, fear, guilt, depression, intense anger, withdrawal, inability to rest, increased use of sick time, increased alcohol consumption, anger at God, questioning of basic beliefs and withdrawal from place of worship.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL FOR TEAM SUPPORT?

The understanding and support of loved ones usually cause the stress reactions to pass more quickly. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness, but simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage themselves.

We strongly encourage emergency service agencies to contact our team whenever their personnel have been exposed to any critical incident such as, major vehicle accidents involving fatalities or serious injuries, in-the-line of duty injury or death, major fires, severe injury or death of children, natural and community wide disasters, terrorist attacks, homicides and suicides. Our team services are not limited to recent events but can include past critical incidents that may not have been resolved. Pre-incident and team educational services are also available.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

All of the services that we provide to emergency service personnel and their families are confidential.

The Berrien County CISM Team has 503(c) status. Therefore, all donations made to the team are tax deductible.

Picture used by permission of the American Red Cross.



Berrien County Critical Incident Stress Management Team Information Request

Please send me more information about:

Team

- Membership
- Training
- Availability

Financial Contributions

- Making Donations
- Team Sponsorship

Mail request to:

Berrien County CISM Team

c/o Joe Garski

7433 Porter Dr

Eau Claire, MI 49111

Name

Address

Phone