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SHERIFF

Kent County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedure

Subject: Critical Incident Stress	General Order: 2 . 1 . 6
Effective Date: 09/19/2022	Distribution:
Revision Date: 10/13/2022	All Personnel

I. PURPOSE

The Kent County Sheriff's Office is committed to the well-being of all department members and will provide support for those experiencing personal or professional stress. It is recognized that individual emotional reactions to potentially traumatic events or critical incidents can have adverse effects on an employee's job performance and health. Critical incident debriefing utilizes appropriate resources to aid and support department members experiencing stress-related symptoms.

II. POLICY

In an effort to maintain a quality work environment, the department endorses the concept of organized debriefing to help mitigate the impact of stress on personnel exposed to critical incidents. The establishment of this policy is to outline departmental procedures for debriefing after exposure to a critical incident.

The Kent County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team is the Sheriff's Office's preferred group to conduct critical incident debriefings. If the Peer Support Team is unavailable, and arrangements cannot be made by the Peer Support Team, personnel are encouraged to contact the Employee Assistance Program (Encompass), or other public or private mental health service providers.

If department members notice stress-induced behavior in their co-workers, it should be reported immediately to a supervisor, as this could have serious ramifications if not addressed.

An employee involved in a traumatic critical incident may be placed on critical incident leave if deemed necessary by the Sheriff or their designee. While on critical incident leave, the employee shall be provided post-incident debriefing and counseling before returning to full duty status. The Sheriff or their designee should consider assisting the involved employee's family by referring them to the established Employee Assistance

Program (Encompass).

While on critical incident leave, the employee may request to be temporarily assigned to a modified position to further their recovery if the transfer would be deemed beneficial for the employee and would not extend beyond their treatment period. Any temporary transfer would require the approval of the Sheriff.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Critical Incident:** Any actual or alleged event or situation that creates a significant risk of substantial or serious harm to an employee's physical or mental health, safety, or well-being.
- B. **Critical Incident Stress:** Acute or cumulative psychological stress or trauma that an employee experiences from involvement with a critical incident. Exposure to cumulative psychological stress can cause an emotional, behavioral, or physical reaction that may interfere with normal daily functioning. Below are common stress reactions often associated with acute/cumulative psychological stress:
1. Physical and emotional illness.
 2. Failure of usual coping mechanisms.
 3. Loss of interest in the job or everyday life activities.
 4. Personality changes.
 5. Loss of ability to function, such as:
 - Inability to sleep.
 - Change of appetite.
 6. Psychological disruption of personal life, including relationships with others.
- C. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A condition that may result in long-term psychological trauma following a traumatic event generally outside the range of everyday human experiences.
- D. **Incident Debrief:** An educational process designed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential training needs after a high-risk, low-frequency event. These are designed to promote individual and team growth.
- E. **Critical Incident Stress Debrief (CISD):** A form of psychological debriefing used

to mitigate the harmful effects of work-related trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.

- F. **Defusing:** A smaller, scaled-down version of a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing conducted by at least two members of the Peer Support Team. The defusing usually takes place within eight hours of the critical incident.
- G. **One on One:** Discussion between a Peer Support Team member and potentially affected employee.
- H. **Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM):** A specialized team who provides critical incident stress management services to any agency personnel affected by a traumatic event.
- I. **Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP):** Any individual licensed as a mental health professional.
- J. **Involved Personnel:** Anyone involved and/or affected by a critical incident.
- K. **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** An agency-sponsored program that provides confidential and professional assistance for employees and immediate family members who may be experiencing personal problems/difficulties.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Critical Incident Stress Debrief

A Critical Incident Stress Debrief is an interactive support process designed specifically for application with personnel that has experienced or been exposed to a traumatic event. A Critical Incident Stress Debrief may be needed after an event with an unusually powerful impact on personnel.

B. Organization

Kent County Sheriff's Office Peer Support Team members shall be comprised of sworn and civilian department members selected by the administration.

The Peer Support Team shall have a Team Coordinator designated by the Office of the Sheriff. The Team Coordinator shall coordinate team training and peer support responses to critical stress incidents. The coordinator shall maintain a current list of Peer Support Team members.

Members shall receive initial training in Critical Incident Stress Management and attend additional training as designated by the Office of the Sheriff.

C. Activation

Activation of the Peer Support Team may occur by:

1. An employee notifying a team member that they or another employee may have been affected by a critical stress incident.
2. A team member that recognizes that a critical incident has occurred.
3. Direct contact with the Team Coordinator, team liaison, or by any employee, supervisor, or Command Staff member.
4. Once a team member has made an assessment, they shall notify the Team Coordinator to determine the appropriate team response.

If the Peer Support Team is activated, notification shall be made to Divisional Commander.

An updated registry of team members shall be maintained in the Communication Center.

Only the Team Coordinator or other supervisor/command officer can authorize the call-in of off-duty Peer Support Team members.

D. Officer Involved Incidents

Peer Support Team members may be called to the scene of significant incidents, including, but not limited to:

1. Line of duty death of any department member.
2. Suicide/attempt suicide of any department member.
3. Officer-involved shooting.
4. Violent/traumatic injury or death of any department member.
5. Major disaster or mass casualty event.
6. Active shooter event.
7. Terrorist attack.

8. Natural disaster.
9. Traumatic injury or death of a child.
10. Serious, multiple casualty incidents.
11. Traumatic incidents where victims are known by and/or related to members of the department.
12. A prolonged rescue, especially with a negative outcome.
13. Any other event that has an unusually powerful impact on department members.

The Team Coordinator, or their designee, shall be contacted to arrange for a Peer Support Team member or members to respond to such scenes where on-scene supervisors deem a Peer Support Team representative is warranted. Peer Team members may respond as a pair to these incidents. One Peer Team member will be selected from the active Peer Team roster by affected staff to accompany them for the duration of the incident to provide support and information. The selected member from the Peer Team will be the liaison between the affected employee, their family, and the Employee Assistance Program.

E. Confidentiality

Confidentiality of matters discussed by team members and employees is necessary for the program to be helpful to the employee. The Office of the Sheriff fully supports this concept, and no internal investigation(s) for administrative purposes will be authorized to interview the team member regarding conversations of a support nature associated with this program as long as the confidentiality standards fall within the laws governing it (MCL 333.20982 of the Public Health Code).

This section does not preclude any advisement to the administration of any perceived emotional or psychological warning signs that the employee may not be fit for duty or harmful to self or others.

F. Departmental Chaplains/Outside Clergy

The concept of the Peer Support Team is not to displace but to complement the functions of any chaplains or clergy associated with the Kent County Sheriff's Office. The support team may utilize or request clergy when rendering services to the employee.

G. Common Strategies for Critical Incident Stress Debrief

1. Organized Debriefing – This debrief will be facilitated by a Qualified Mental Health Professional, Critical Incident Stress Management Team, or a collaboration of both, determinate on the circumstances of the incident. The goal of this debrief is to be conducted as soon as possible, preferably within 24-48 hours post-incident. This debrief can be conducted with any size group.
2. Follow-up Incident Debrief – The primary purpose of this debrief is to address any issues not resolved through the initial debriefing. Follow-up incident debriefs can involve all or some of the group and facilitators of the organized debrief. This usually occurs several weeks after the incident.
3. Training –Staff will receive initial training and annual refresher training in stress recognition.

H. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

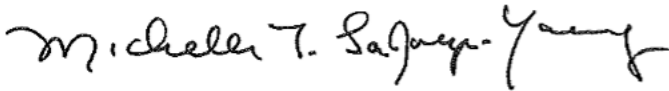
The contracted EAP, Encompass, will assist Peer Support Team members during all debriefings and may be called in on a case-by-case basis to assist with other critical stress incidents and defusing. A Peer Support Team member will coordinate with the EAP to schedule their attendance on such occasions.

I. State of Michigan Law

Public Act 40 of 2016 addresses CISM services regarding pre-crisis education, defusing, debriefings, on-scene support services, and referral services for emergency service providers (i.e., law enforcement/corrections officers and dispatchers). This act protects communications between trained CISM members and these providers. The Sheriff's Office fully supports these protected communications, as prescribed by law, between Peer Team members and affected staff.

V. CANCELLATIONS**2.1.6 – Critical Incident Stress (09/19/2022)**

Authorized by:



Michelle LaJoye-Young, Sheriff

Index as: Standard 2.1.6

Application: This directive constitutes department policy and is not intended to enlarge the employer's or employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It shall not be construed as the creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense concerning third-party claims insofar as the employer's or employee's legal duty as imposed by law.

KENT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE