

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES		
Policy Number: GA-17	Effective Date: December 1, 2021	Version: 4.0
POLICY TITLE: CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE		
OVERVIEW: The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will utilize aspects of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) or psychological first aid to provide supportive interventions to employees when work-related critical or high stress incidents occur.		

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): An intervention developed specifically for processing traumatic events. CISM is a formal, highly structured, and professionally recognized process for helping those involved in a critical incident to share their experiences, vent emotions, learn about stress reactions and symptoms, and receive referrals for further assistance, if necessary. It is not psychotherapy. It is a confidential, voluntary, and educational process, sometimes called “psychological first aid” (<https://www.icisf.org/>).
- B. Psychological First Aid: The National Traumatic Stress Network (<https://www.nctsn.org>) defines psychological first aid as “an evidence-informed modular approach to help children, adolescents, adults, and families in the immediate aftermath of disaster and terrorism”.

II. REFERENCES

[Critical Incident Protocol](#)

III. STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

- A. DCS will provide supportive interventions to employees when work-related critical or high stress incidents occur.
- B. The DCS Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) is comprised of Family Case Managers (FCMs), FCM Supervisors, Local Office Directors (LODs), Division Managers (DMs), and Regional Managers (RMs) from across the state, as well as, Central Office employees (including Child Support Bureau [CSB] staff) trained in CISM responses or psychological first aid.
- C. Only trained DCS staff will respond to critical incidents.
- D. Any DCS staff may request a CIRT response by completing a [CIRT Request](#).
- E. A response may be appropriate for incidents including, but not limited to:
 - 1. The fatality of a child involved with DCS, including a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) or Informal Adjustment (IA) case, or during the course of an assessment;
 - 2. A child fatality assessment;
 - 3. Threat of harm or actual harm to an employee, during and/or related to the employee’s performance of DCS duties;
 - 4. Any assessment or case receiving a high degree of media scrutiny aimed at a particular office or employee(s);
 - 5. The death of a co-worker;
 - 6. A parental death on an assessment/case; and/or

7. Any other work-related critical incident resulting in an increased stress response.
- F. Any DCS Staff may make a CIRT request on behalf of the employee by completing a [CIRT Request](#). It is recommended that the request is made within 24 hours of the incident.
- G. The CIRT Liaison will determine if the request is appropriate and, if appropriate, initiate the CIRT response by contacting the CIRT to secure responders and schedule the response.
- H. The response is a confidential service. As with any confidential service, if issues of safety to the employee, a child, or any other person come to the attention of the responder, the responder has a duty to inform appropriate parties.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Requesting a CIRT response:

1. DCS staff or an employee's colleague, Supervisor, LOD, DM, RM, or Deputy Director, on behalf of the employee, may request a CIRT response by completing a [CIRT Request](#) (it is recommended that the request is made within 24 hours of the incident).
2. The CIRT Liaison will determine if the request is appropriate by contacting the requestor within one (1) business day of the request to evaluate the appropriateness of a CIRT response.

Note: If there is a concern about the appropriateness of a CIRT response, the concern should be reviewed by the Deputy Director of the requesting division and the Safe Systems Director and referred to Human Resources (HR), if the request is determined to be an HR matter.

3. The CIRT Liaison will schedule the response, if the request is appropriate, and contact the CIRT to secure responders.

Note: If the requestor is not a Supervisor or above, the CIRT Liaison will contact the appropriate management team member so arrangements may be made for the employee/employees to attend.

B. Response of the CIRT:

1. If a CIRT response is appropriate, an individual or team of individuals who have been trained and certified in CISM or psychological first aid will respond. The need for, and appropriateness of a CIRT intervention, is based on how individuals are coping with the critical incident, not solely on the incident itself.
2. Following an intervention, the CIRT Liaison will follow-up with the requestor, and when appropriate a member of the management team, to discuss and make a collaborative decision regarding whether further intervention is needed.

V. FORMS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

- A. [Critical Incident Protocol](#)- available from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. training.
- B. [CIRT Request](#)

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