

Are You Prepared for Crisis at Work?

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Life continues to bring multiple stresses and challenges for employers and employees. Many workplace stressors are somewhat predictable, such as schedule and productivity demands, or restructuring.

Unfortunately, there are also a wide range of non-predictable stresses which significantly impact the workplace and employee productivity. EAPs are increasingly called upon to help employers prepare for and manage the effects of these unpredictable "Critical Incidents."



What are Critical Incidents? --Unexpected disruptive events such as:

- the sudden death of an employee
- a serious accident or illness of a coworker
- a suicide
- threatening situations such as robberies, assaults, fires, explosions
- natural disasters

The response to a Critical Incident needs to consider the magnitude of the event, those directly traumatized, those who witnessed the event, and also the larger group of concerned coworkers who are impacted by the events.

When a crisis occurs, professional EAP counselors are often involved in consultation with key members of the organization-- Management, Human Resources, Medical, Safety and Security teams. In addition, an EAP specialist may meet with individuals or groups at the worksite and/or the EAP office.

These group meetings are widely referred to as Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISDs).

What are the goals of Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISDs)?

- To help identify employees who are most distressed and reduce the negative impact
- To help employees place events into manageable perspective, discuss “normal reactions to abnormal events”, and provide suggestions for coping
- To facilitate return to normal personal and work life, and create linkages with ongoing support and resources.

When should an organization consult a counselor or plan for a CISD?

Any time a sudden or traumatic event occurs, it is wise to ask several key questions.

Are coworkers distressed and distracted from reasonable productivity due to a significant loss or trauma which occurred outside the workplace?

How well is the organization demonstrating concern for people and safety?
Employees who perceive their company to value people, safety, security, and their emotional well-being rebound more quickly.

When a crisis occurs, the use of EAP resources and support helps individuals and the entire organization return to stability and productivity.

None of us wants Crisis to strike near us...but when a Critical Incident occurs, we encourage you to contact REAP. We can suggest helpful and appropriate responses, as well as how and when to plan onsite services to assist you through difficult times.

Things you can do NOW to prevent and prepare for crisis:

- Update disaster policies
- Conduct safety drills
- Identify “first responders”
- Train in First Aid, CPR, etc.
- Develop a crisis phone tree
- Consult with your EAP
- Train supervisors and employees on dealing with danger or “angry people”
- Set up guidelines for response to serious accidents or the death of an employee