

BETHANY, YATES & ASSOCIATES

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Violence, natural disasters, death/suicide, emergency care of ill or injured groups, affect Corps employees on all levels and impact the entire USACE community. Unaddressed, these incidents destabilize the sense of community within a work group and interfere with the day to day operations. Since the first members of the USACE Critical Incident Stress Management team were trained in 2001, the following services have been provided:

- 1) Consultation & assistance to site management
- 2) Support to staff including:
 - 1) One-on-One meetings
 - 2) Defusings
 - 3) Debriefings
 - 4) Follow-up and referral
- 3) Education:
 - 1) Stress Management
 - 2) Suicide Prevention

Initially, the services provided were spotty at best and depended largely on relationships within the organization, ie., if a team was known by a Commander or their designee that work group might receive services based the Commander's opinion of the individual team member. After going national in 2006, numerous marketing efforts have been launched and much progress has been made to link the organization through communication and provide services more consistently.

The numbers of individuals who have received services from the USACE CISM team has doubled yearly since 2008. Feedback heard repeatedly from individuals taking part in a debriefing or defusing is: "thank you, what a worthwhile investment of my time." Unfortunately, until an individual experiences a crisis, they often don't believe they will ever need to know about CISM. On the day that something tragic happens, their recall of how to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or how to manage stress is impaired. What is central to the vision of CISM teams worldwide is that individuals receive assistance in the form of a peer/coworker trained to provide tools for managing a crisis and referral to a competent mental health provider. The reality is: every CISM-trained person in an organization is an asset. Even those who have no interest in serving on a team could better understand stress, its effects, and how to mitigate the effects of traumatic stress.

The USACE Critical Incident Stress Management team is a group of educated, compassionate professionals who use their extensive training to manage crises in the workplace and assist individuals with a comprehensive multicomponent program which has the flexibility to be applied to a wide variety of groups and settings. From a mental health professional's standpoint, the utilization of a CISM team is an asset to any organization and I wholeheartedly endorse the USACE Critical Incident Stress Management team.

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