

September, 2011

US Army Corps of Engineers Annual Performance Report for CISM Program

USACE Historical Context

Since the American Revolution the engineers have served in combat in all American wars. In addition to civil responsibilities the USACE has responded to changing defense requirements and played an integral part in the development of the country. Throughout the 19th century, the Corps built coastal fortifications, surveyed roads and canals, eliminated navigational hazards, explored and mapped the Western frontier, and constructed buildings and monuments in the Nation's capital. Currently, responsible for investigating, developing and maintaining the nation's water and related environmental resources with a mission to: *provide public engineering services in peace and war to strengthen our Nation's security, energize the economy, and reduce risks from disasters.* USACE serves all 50 states, Afghanistan, Europe, the Far East, Japan, and the Middle East.

As rich as its history and vast as its reach, the USACE also knows the following truth: "These are historic times in our Nation and in the world, and the Corps will play a pivotal role in helping shape America's future. The Corps will grow stronger and become a great organization by delivering superior performance, setting the standard for our profession, making a positive impact on the Nation and other nations, and building to last, as evidenced by the strength of our team — educated, trained, experienced, and certified professionals."(USACE Website)

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USACE and Critical Incident Stress Management

One of the tools used to strengthen teams within the USACE organization is a comprehensive, integrative, multicomponent crisis intervention system. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is considered comprehensive because it consists of multiple crisis intervention components, which functionally span the entire temporal spectrum of a crisis. CISM interventions range from the pre-crisis phase through the acute crisis phase, and into the post-crisis phase. CISM is also considered comprehensive in that it consists of interventions which may be applied to individuals, small functional groups, large groups, families, organizations, and even communities. ([A PRIMER ON CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT \(CISM\)](#) George S. Everly, Jr., Ph.D., C.T.S. and Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D., C.T.S.)

Critical Incident Stress Management fits well under Goal 1 for USACE: **Ready for All Contingencies.** USACE will provide support to combat, stability, and disaster operations through forward deployed and reach back capabilities. This includes support to the Army, the Nation, and our international partners in domestic incident response and military contingencies. **Objective 1c:** Establish human resources and family support programs that promote readiness and quality of life (USACE Website).

Supporting USACE civilians and their families who are deployed for contingency operations is a priority. The multicomponent system of Critical Incident Stress Management is a perfect addition to the other tools that keep a workforce “Ready for All Contingencies.” The support highly trained peers can provide civilians and their families help maintain a workforce that is healthy and functioning to their maximum potential.

The CISM initiative also ties to Goal 4: **Recruit and Retain Strong Teams.** USACE will build and cultivate a competent, disciplined, and resilient team equipped to deliver high quality solutions.

Communication is key: with employees, stakeholders and the public. USACE is committed to ensuring that every member of USACE is provided with the capability and capacity to become GREAT(USACE Website)!

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Every employee who feels valued and part of a skilled and disciplined team will thrive within the healthy environment of an organization that seeks to put their most valuable resource at the forefront. CISM encourages all employees to see their contribution and to learn ways to positively impact their own as well as the lives of others.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Critical Incident Stress Management program is to provide support, assistance and education to USACE employees for incidental or cumulative critical incident stress experienced in the performance of their jobs and/or in the event of major civil emergencies, natural disasters, or military contingencies.

USACE and CISM Historical Context

In 2004, a small group of employees in SWD began studying crisis intervention techniques with the understanding that the nature of the USACE work is inherently stressful and individuals need a way to understand work and personal stress and find ways to mitigate the effects of that stress. About 10 employees initially received training in Basic CISM and began peer interventions in the Southwest Division. CISM was adopted more widely by USACE because this systems approach underscores the importance of using multiple interventions combined in such a manner as to yield maximum impact to achieve the goal of crisis stabilization and symptom mitigation.

Since 2005, the USACE international team has trained over 50 personnel and currently has 35 active team members with a minimum of 24 hours of CISM training. They have responded to major disasters, including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike, Gustav and local incidents in every division except NWD and SAD. Some of the incidents USACE CISM team members respond to are: public drownings, suicides (both public and employee), accidents, heart attacks, incidents involving children.

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Some of the most impressive work done by the USACE CISM team has been the education sessions provided to employees about stress. Valuable information has been shared with the result of numerous positive comments, both following an education session and following a more formal intervention.

Overview

The USACE has a team of well-trained individuals who strive to improve through education and experience to:

- 1) Provide consultation & assistance to site management;
- 2) Assist management in assessing staff needs;
- 3) Render support to staff;
- 4) Provide referral and follow-up services; and
- 5) Provide adequate support and care for USACE CISM Team members.

The clinical education to provide the services mentioned above is extensive and includes Basic and Advanced Critical Incident Stress Management, Peer Support, and Strategic Response to Crisis, as well as Suicide Prevention. This year a class on Battlemind was also added. The USACE CISM team of peer supporters is one of the most highly trained teams in the country.

Interventions

Boscarino, et al., 2002; Boscarino, Adams, et al., 2004 found that brief worksite crisis intervention provided by employers clearly benefited employees as many as 2 years after the event, specifically the World Trade Center Disaster. Anyone who works with the wide range of interventions involved with Critical Incident Stress Management knows the value. Peer supporters can see almost immediate relief on the faces and in the posture of the individuals they meet with and the comments following interventions are overwhelmingly positive and grateful in nature.

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In the past year, the USACE CISM team provided training on:

- ✓ CISM Orientation
- ✓ Stress Management
- ✓ Access to EAP Services

This training impacted close to 100 individuals who received face to face training. The team continues to reach out to those involved in incidents with phone calls, letters and informational brochures.

The CISM Peer Team provided 3 Crisis Management Briefings; 19 one-on-one responses; 6 debriefings. All individuals who saw a peer supporter were given some type of follow-up/reach back contact.

The individuals who received services commented positively about the organization and the assistance offered them. Some of the remarks shared are: "I really needed someone to talk with and you are a good listener." "I feel calmer." Participant to his supervisor: "definitely valuable... and it's always a good idea to get things off your chest..." Supervisor asked participant if he would recommend CISM to his fellow employees and he stated : "...CISM attendance should be mandatory for things like this..."

Supervisor comment to peer supporter: "His last statement says it all. Thank you for all your efforts."

Second line Supervisor comment: "timely and excellent support."

Participants liked the symptoms listed on the brochure. They commented it was good to know what to look for and what was normal for short periods of time. "Our district should get serious about automatically deploying a CISM peer supporter." "Wasn't sure I wanted to do this but now I think it's worthwhile."

Recommendations

1. USACE utilizes innovative ideas to promote public safety initiatives. Promoting CISM and EAP access need to be approached in a similar

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manner. Continued and perhaps new efforts should be made to ensure that all employees are aware that both CISM and EAP services are available.

2. More judicious deployment. Generally, the same peer supporters are the responders for almost every event. Now that more individuals have been trained, I would encourage those who normally respond to push others to get some experience. The reality is that the more you respond, the more you are prone to burn out.
3. Due to the nature of the work and the geographical distance between the peer supporters, it is difficult to share successes, lessons learned, etc. Set a time every other month to have a conference call meeting where ideas and information are shared and the Management Team can reinforce expectations.
4. Revisit how the need for deployment is communicated. "CISM deployment is contingent upon a formal request by the local DE; however the need for a deployment is communicated up through channels from those involved at the incident level. Depending on the formality of communication within the chain-of-command, there may be as many as a half-dozen levels of supervision through which this communication must travel. I believe some modification of our communication and/or deployment procedures is needed to ensure that personnel are made fully aware and reminded of the services available to them *specifically* at the time of any individual incident."
5. Plan some teaching/information sharing events to correspond with National Preparedness Month next September.
6. Tracking forms have been updated to include numbers of individuals served by the USACE CISM team, but a further assessment sent to the site following an intervention could provide more data. Some questions that could be included:

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- 1) Were you aware of the USACE CISM Team prior to this meeting?
- 2) How did you access the team or make a request?
- 3) Were you experiencing any of the following prior to the meeting?
 - a. Difficulty sleeping
 - b. Difficulty focusing
 - c. Anxiety
 - d. Nightmares
 - e. Shortness of breath
 - f. Irritability
- 4) How helpful did you feel the intervention was in alleviating symptoms of stress?
 - a. Not at all
 - b. Somewhat helpful
 - c. Moderately helpful
 - d. Helpful
 - e. Extremely helpful

Overall, the USACE CISM Team is a group of committed individuals who invest emotional energy and expertise to assist their coworkers in mitigating the impact of critical incident stress. I am pleased with the direction of this program and as I have noted previously, this group is one of the best trained teams I have had the pleasure of being affiliated with.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

The USACE CISM Team is a relatively small group compared to the numbers they serve but they make a major impact!

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. Bethany, LCSW, CTS, EMDR certified

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Invoice for Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Consultant &
Instructional Services Rendered 01 September 2010 – 30 September 2011:

1. Bethany, Yates & Associates
803 Stadium Dr Ste 101
Arlington, TX 76011

2. Invoice Date September 22, 2011 Invoice Number 2011-2

3. Contract # W912BV-06-P-0375
Line Item #1 Level I Services \$6,365.00
Line Item #4 Per Diem St. Louis Area
(August 28-29) \$ 132.00
Line Item #5 Travel Costs St. Louis Area \$ 561.53

Total Owed Contractor \$7,058.53

4. Payment Terms: NA

5. Payment Discount: NA

6. Payment may be sent to:

Cynthia L. Bethany
Bethany, Yates & Associates
803 Stadium Dr Ste 101
Arlington, TX 76011

7. Deficient invoice notification if needed may be addressed to: Cynthia L. Bethany at the above address or by phone (817)459-2003.