

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

Critical Incident Stress Management is a comprehensive, integrated multi-component crisis intervention system. CISM services provide a framework for the application of education and crisis intervention during the acute stage following a critical incident. These services enhance and compliment the delivery of traditional mental health services and include:

1. **Pre-crisis preparation:** Working with schools to help set expectations for what to do when a critical incident occurs.
2. **Individual consultation:** A structured one-to-one technique used by a trained counselor or professional after a critical incident.
3. **Briefing:** A presentation to groups following a crisis or critical incident to share information, reduce and dispel rumors, and provide details of action plans.
4. **Defusing:** A group crisis intervention technique conducted by a trained facilitator, usually occurring in the first 12-24 hours after a critical incident.
5. **Debriefing** (a.k.a., Critical Incident Stress Debriefing or CISD). A structured small-group process targeted toward mitigating or resolving the psychological distress associated with a critical incident or traumatic event, usually occurring in the first 10 days following an event.
6. **Parent/family/organization consultation:** A group process conducted to provide ongoing education and support to families, parent groups or organizations following a critical incident.
7. **Referral/follow-up:** A process to assure that individuals experiencing intense symptoms and who need ongoing support will be referred for appropriate mental health services.

One common way to organize the above interventions is to set up a “Drop in Room.” A Drop in Room is a safe, welcoming place for students or staff to gather during the school day for group or individual support from trained team members.