

WORKPLACE TRAUMA THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Presented by,
Randy Kratz, MS, LCSW, LPC
Senior Managing Consultant
IMPACT Workplace Services

Presentation Objectives

- You will be provided with an overview of the topic of workplace trauma and CISM response
- You will learn to identify and react to critical incidents when they impact the workplace
- Guidelines and protocol for organizational response will be outlined

Broader Presentation Purpose

- ① Educate all staff about critical incidents, vicarious trauma, PTSD and the potential implications for personnel
- ① The topic needs to be discussed without judgment or disdain
- ① The topic needs to be understood and normalized as a component of a healthy organization

Role of the Employee Assistance and Critical Incident Stress Management Programs (EAP/CISM)

- ⦿ Policy and procedure development
- ⦿ Provide pre-incident CISM training
- ⦿ Consult with managers and employees
- ⦿ Assist employees and families with recovery
- ⦿ Deliver and coordinate CISM services

EAP/CISM Model

City of Madison

◎ Dual Model – Internal/External

- Internal: Tresa Martinez and Patrick Nottingham
- External: Impact, 24/7 coverage
- EAP core services are the same
- Provides an outside point of access to services
- Coordination on CISM services
- Impact can also offer specialized, immediate access to trauma counselors, conflict mediation and short-term couple counseling

EAP/CISM Goal

- To maintain healthy and productive employees who can provide quality service for the Madison community
- **EAP**: Assists with problems that may affect individual and family well-being and work productivity
- **CISM**: Help employees prepare for and recover from critical incidents

EAP Cost Savings

- The U.S. Department of Labor reports that employers generally find that for every dollar invested in an EAP, savings of from \$5 to \$16 are achieved
- Tangible benefits: reduced medical insurance costs, lower utilization of sick leave, and accidental benefits
- Intangible benefits: improved productivity, morale, co-worker morale, employee relations, reduced turn-over rates, grievances, etc.

What is the EAP?

- ⦿ A free program that is available to help:
 - Employees
 - Family Members
 - Significant Others
- ⦿ Help to resolve:
 - Personal problems
 - Work-related problems

Three Primary Program Aspects of EAP

- 1) Information and Referral
- 2) Voluntary
- 3) Confidential

Exceptions to Confidentiality

- ⦿ **An unexplained, unusual, or suspicious death**
- ⦿ **A case of suspected abuse or suspected neglect of a child**
- ⦿ **A threat to one's own life or safety or that of another**
- ⦿ **A threat to commit, or report of committing a serious crime**
- ⦿ **A threat to public health and safety**

Employee Problem Areas

- ④ Think about the kinds of problems that you see with employees at work
- ④ Think about the kinds of problems that we have in our society, in our families and in our world
- ④ What do you think are the common problems that people bring to the EAP?

Common EAP Problems

- Relationships – work and home
- Work stress
- Emotional – depression, anxiety
- Grief and loss
- Alcohol and other drug use/addictions
- Financial
- Balancing the demands of work and home
- Divorce and Separation
- Trauma/critical incidents
- Childcare/eldercare
- Medical
- Legal

What the EAP Is Not.....

- ◎ **EAP use is not a substitute for discipline:**
 - Discipline continues
 - Performance Standards must be met
- ◎ **EAP does not deal with personnel issues:**
 - Reclassification Requests
 - Job Transfer/Promotions
 - Grievances
- ◎ **EAP is not:**
 - Therapy
 - Fitness for Duty
 - AODA Testing

EAP Provides Supervisory Consultation

- Recognizing personal and/or performance problems
- Providing feedback to the employee
- Encouraging and supporting the employee to seek help
- Identifying a critical incident and offering timely help to the employee/s
- Helping the employee return to work if they have to take time off

CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE APM 2-15

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

A system of services for helping organizations and employees prepare for and recover from traumatic events in the workplace

What is a Critical Incident?

- An event which is outside the usual range of experience for most people and which would be markedly distressing to almost anyone.

Critical Incidents at Work

- Given the definition and examples, what have you experienced or witnessed in your own work environments?
- Do you see areas or situations where potential critical incidents could occur?

Examples of a Critical Incident:

- ⦿ Serious injury or death of:
 - Employee
 - Member of the public while performing job duties
- ⦿ Suicide/homicide of employee
- ⦿ Prolonged/extraordinary rescue
- ⦿ Any incident which can be considered a serious physical or psychological threat to an employee while performing work duties

More Critical Incident Examples

- Incidents involving vulnerable populations: children, elderly, disabled
- Unusual media coverage
- Almost any event which is charged with profound emotion or particularly tragic circumstances

Calls and cases that stick with you

- What are the distinctive traits or factors that set them apart from others?
 - Children, elderly and other vulnerable populations
 - Close personal association with victims
 - Unsuccessful rescue attempt
 - Senseless human acts
 - Perceived personal threat
 - Excessive media coverage
 - Negative outcome

Normal Reactions to a C.I.

- Remember that everyone reacts differently to stress.
- Think of your own reaction as a fingerprint.
- It is uniquely yours and is not better or worse than the way someone else might react.

Critical Incident Stress Reactions

- ⦿ Physical, behavioral, thinking and emotional reactions
 - Physical and behavioral reactions usually felt earlier.
 - Thinking and feeling usually comes later
- ⦿ Direct vs. indirect exposure
- ⦿ Pre-incident trauma history
- ⦿ Personal identification with incident/victim

Critical Incident Interventions

- On scene/near scene response for acute stress reactions in the field
- Large group informational meetings
- Defusing/check-in
- Debriefing
- Follow-up/referral

Goals of C.I. Response

- ⦿ Allows for rapid ventilation/release of the stress from the critical incident
- ⦿ Can help the employee transition away from the incident
- ⦿ Receive support from peers
- ⦿ Opportunity for education on post-incident reactions and self care

Goals (continued)

- Reduce the impact of the event
- Accelerate recovery process
- Assess the need for debriefing/s or other critical incident services, including follow-up
- Reduce impact of critical incident stress reactions by providing information, support, direction

Defusing Defined

- Not counseling, not critique, not fitness for duty, not personnel file material or a disciplinary tool
- Provides rapid stress relief and stabilization immediately following the critical incident
- Individual or group attendance by all personnel involved in critical incident
- Conducted by a CISM Provider

Benefits of a CISM Defusing

- Provides immediate support
- Allows an opportunity for an informational update
- Is conducted before end of work shift
- May eliminate the need for a formal debriefing
- Helps the CISM provider assess where additional support is needed

Debriefing Defined

- A structured, group crisis intervention facilitated by a mental health professional (CISM Provider)
- The purpose is to facilitate psychological and emotional recovery and reconstruction
- It is a group discussion where participants are encouraged to discuss the critical incident and their reactions to the incident
- Suggestions are provided for coping and stress management

CISM Best Practice

- **Provide pre-incident education/training**
- **Buy-in and support at all levels of the organization**
- **Have a clear/organized set of policies, procedures and resources in place**
- **Always voluntary**

CISM Best Practice

- ⦿ **Activated based on event**
- ⦿ **It becomes natural protocol**
- ⦿ **Homogeneous grouping with similar involvement on the call**
- ⦿ **Always confidential**

CISM Best Practices

- Offer support right away but don't overwhelm
- Assess for similar exposure
- Focus on resiliency and self-care
- Provide many confidential points of access to help
- Allow as much privacy as possible
- Follow up and on-going support
- Extend support and resources to significant others

Vicarious/Secondary Trauma:

- ◎ This kind of stress can also occur to witnesses and others close to the impacted person – known as ***vicarious or secondary trauma***

It can.....

- ⦿ Increase our anxiety about the meaning of our work, our life and our death
- ⦿ Be a threat to our sense of power, mastery and control over our lives and our families lives
- ⦿ It forces us to “seek to define” what success means in our work
- ⦿ Our coping mechanisms can become overwhelmed

Associated Life Impact

- ⦿ Excessive anger
- ⦿ Relationship discord
- ⦿ Employment problems
- ⦿ Financial distress
- ⦿ Loss of identity and worldview
- ⦿ Social isolation
- ⦿ Lack of self-care
- ⦿ Poor concentration and memory
- ⦿ Increased unnecessary risk taking

Occupational variables that impact response:

- ⦿ Support resources may vary
- ⦿ Relationship dynamics of the team/troop
- ⦿ Resources are not always known
- ⦿ The degree of empathy contributes to the response
- ⦿ Cultural, religious and gender beliefs can influence our response

Impact on Teams

- ⦿ Can reduce effectiveness
- ⦿ Team members may seek to detach from others
- ⦿ Contagious negative emotion
- ⦿ The emotional reactions can cause conflict over assignments, personal and professional boundaries and noticeable change in work product
- ⦿ Impacts interpersonal relationships due to common and normal PTS symptoms like frustration, irritability and depression

Employee Impact Post Traumatic Stress:

- ④ The psychological and physical reactions of your mind and body to PTS are at the extremes of life experience
- ④ These affects and reactions are involuntary
- ④ It is a natural uncontrollable physical and psychological reaction to an event(s) by our mind and body

Common PTSD Symptoms

- **Intrusive**

Extreme nightmares

Extreme paranoia

Flashbacks

Intrusive thoughts

Sense of doom

Sense of a shortened
future

- **Avoidance –
internal or external**

Depression

Isolation

Avoiding work

Loss of interest in
intimacy

Loss of faith

Work quality drops

Addictions

Memory loss or poor
recall

Common PTSD Symptoms

⦿ **Arousal/Anxiety**

Heightened fight or flight

Problems sleeping

Irritability/hyperactive

More than usual contempt
with supervisors, peers,
customers

Increasingly cynical

Outbursts of anger or rage

Paranoia

Exaggerated startle
response

⦿ **Somatic Problems**

Frequent headaches

Chest pains

Gastrointestinal problems

Intestinal pain

High use of antacids

Racing heart rate

Constant fatigue

Typical adjustment

– no PTSD

- ✓ Mild and infrequent symptoms
- ✓ Tends to fade within days
- ✓ Limited impairment in functioning
- ✓ Able to receive support and make sense of the experience
- ✓ No formal treatment typically needed or recommended

When does it become Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

- ⦿ When it becomes extreme and symptoms persist
- ⦿ It is an acute stress disorder that lasts more than 4 weeks

TAKING A LEADERSHIP ROLE RESPONDING TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The Importance of Leadership

- ***Organizational leadership can assist in recovery from the critical incident experience by immediately initiating a response***

Resiliency and Recovery

- A track record of promoting the development of a resilient and healthy workplace prior to an incident is the greatest indicator of how well an organization will respond following a crisis
- If employees believed that their employer cared about them before the incident, they are more likely to trust and follow the lead of management during the aftermath

Resiliency and Recovery

- ⦿ Organizational resilience is a strength that can be developed
- ⦿ Building that capacity involves networking, resource development and education
- ⦿ Establish those strategic partnerships with resources like EAP, HR, risk management, legal, security, law enforcement, etc., before something happens

Resiliency and Recovery

- Leaders must be highly visible following a crisis in order to set the tone for resiliency and recovery
- The absence of a competent and caring presence from those in authority will encourage blame and outrage
- Frequent communication and dissemination of information during and after a crisis are critical to supporting recovery efforts
- Without it people “fill in the gaps” with their worst possible fears

The leader must be aware of individual's:

- Involvement
- Role and Responsibility
- Exposure - direct/indirect
- Recent or repeated critical incident exposure
- Pertinent personal history
- Reactions:
 - during/immediately following
 - short or long term

Be alert to the employee's stress reactions

- Loss of concentration, focus, decision making ability
- Irritability, anger, behavioral changes
- Withdraw from other staff
- Visibly upset-sadness, fear, anxiety
- Requests to go home

For Supervisors:

- ⦿ Report the incident to the EAP/CISM staff
- ⦿ Consult with EAP Staff to activate the CISM response
- ⦿ The incident will then be evaluated by EAP/CISM staff along with the supervisor/other staff to determine an appropriate level of response

Questions?

- ⦿ What did we learn?
- ⦿ What can we practice?
- ⦿ How will this change our response?

EAP Contact Information:

- ◎ Internal EAP/CISM Office: (608)266-6561
 - Tresa Martinez, EAP Coordinator
 - tmartinez@cityofmadison.com
 - Patrick Nottingham, EAP Specialist
 - pnottingham@cityofmadison.com
- ◎ External EAP and CISM Provider
 - Impact Workplace Services
 - 24-hour (800) 236-7905
 - 7 days/week