

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE SERVICES (CIRS)

Organizational Services in Response to a Traumatic Incident Manager's Guide

After the workplace experiences a traumatic event, it is common and normal for people to experience a wide range of emotional and physical reactions. Sometimes the incident may produce such a strong emotional response, that an individual's ability to cope may be temporarily overwhelmed. Such responses can impact the person's job performance, including productivity and absenteeism. To assist people in processing their reactions to the incident and to reduce performance concerns, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers telephonic support and coordination of onsite services. The following information provides an overview of services that EAP offers and how to access them.

Accessing the EAP in the event of a traumatic incident

You can access the EAP 24 hours a day through your dedicated number which is 888.887.4114. When you speak to an Employee Assistance representative, indicate that your organization needs services following a traumatic incident. The representative will ask you general information about the type of incident and your contact information before connecting you to the EAP counselor specifically trained on CIRS.

After reaching the CIRS coordinator

Once you are connected with a CIRS coordinator, you will be asked very specific information about the incident. This may include the names of the people involved in the incident, details of the incident, and current emotional reactions you are observing. Such detailed information is necessary to help the CIRS coordinator fully assess the situation and make appropriate recommendations. The coordinator will discuss the types of services available and assist in your decision-making. Part of the coordinator's recommendation will include when onsite services should occur, such as on the same day or within 72 hours. The coordinator will locate a clinician who specializes in Critical Incident Response and schedule the onsite service.

After scheduling services

Once scheduled, the coordinator can provide guidance on how to announce the services and describe them to people. As part of the consultation, the coordinator may also send you some handouts that can be photocopied and distributed in conjunction with the onsite services. It is suggested that you reserve a conference room or designate a confidential space for the counselor to meet with your people. Creating a private space will help people feel more comfortable when discussing the incident. Prior to assisting onsite, expect a call from the critical incident responder to discuss the plan of action.

The day of the services

You will want to meet with the counselor after arriving to provide any updates about the incident or your people and to help the counselor get acclimated to the site. Keep in mind that managers should not attend group sessions with their staff; this could prohibit people from feeling comfortable enough to discuss the incident. Managers should meet with the counselor in a separate session. The counselor will provide general feedback from the group sessions (without violating confidentiality), talk to you about the incident, what to expect among people and tips on how to manage their reactions. Additionally, the counselor may help you determine what, if any, future services are recommended.

After the services

Within 24 hours after receiving the services, expect a call from the CIRS coordinator to follow-up on the services and schedule any future sessions. The coordinator will ask how people are feeling now and about the effectiveness of the sessions.

Types of Onsite Services

**Defusing/
Immediate
Response:**

A brief, unstructured intervention that provides immediate support following a traumatic event. It tends to last 30-60 minutes and is conducted within 3 hours following the incident. This intervention can include an informal group meeting and/or individual sessions with people. This type of session is designed to provide immediate support and coping strategies to assist people in remaining at work and maintaining job performance.

**Debriefing/
Response:**

A structured intervention that provides support and education about how to cope with the traumatic event. The group session tends to last 1-3 hours and is conducted 24-72 hours following the incident. It is designed to return individuals to a normal level of functioning, reduce/prevent long term organizational problems, and facilitate recovery from traumatic stress.

**Management
Consultation:**

The CIRS coordinator will assist the manager by providing telephonic support and consultation when choosing the appropriate steps to deal with the critical incident. The onsite counselor will also meet with the management team to provide practical information about signs of distress in employees and how to address issues as they arise.

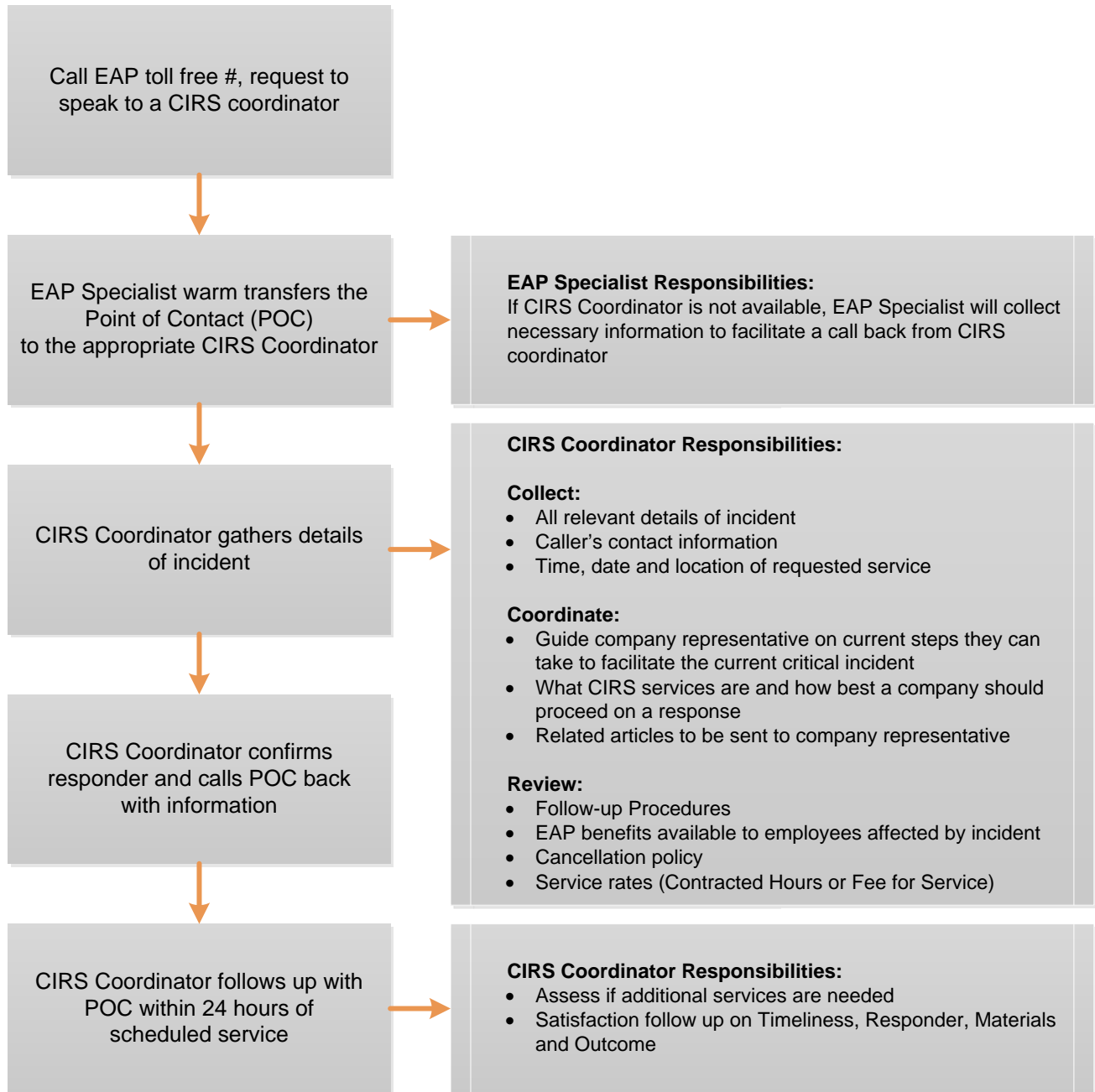
**Individual
Sessions:**

The onsite counselor can also meet with individuals experiencing distress. These sessions are not therapy. The purpose is to allow an individual to privately discuss reactions and approaches for coping.

Education:

Educational programs facilitated through the Workplace Effectiveness program can assist the organization with a variety of workplace concerns. Similar to the debriefing and defusing sessions, educational meetings are not clinical in nature. The educational programs provide helpful tools and resources on a variety of issues (example: dealing with stress). Differing from debriefing and defusing, education sessions generally occur several weeks after the incident.

CIRS Workflow- Guide for Managers



City of Milwaukee: 888-887-4114