



Colorado Crisis Support Network

Guidelines for Crisis Support Services in Extraordinary Events

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Introduction

The following tips for organizing critical incident stress services were developed by the Colorado Crisis Support Network for local teams to review when developing a local disaster or extraordinary event response plan.

Each disaster or catastrophic event is unique. The nature of the disaster or catastrophe, the location of the event, the number of crisis support team members who are involved in the response with their own agency, and numerous other factors will shape the crisis support response. Any plan or guideline must be flexible and adapt to the needs of the situation. These guidelines are a dynamic document and additions and changes are encouraged.

A crisis support team must perform various functions following a major event that will require a long-term response and crisis interventions. Factors that will have an impact on the organized response include, but are not limited to:

- Will responders be returning to the scene for repeated shifts or is their part in the event concluded?
- Are the responders victims of the disaster, for example have they lost property or loved ones? Or has the disaster impacted their family or extended family?
- How many crisis support teams are available in the region? In the state?
- How many of the local crisis support team members were, are, or will be responders to the disaster? How many out-of-area team members were, are, or will be responders to the disaster?
- What is the availability of experienced crisis support team members to assume identified leadership roles for the duration of the response?
- What resources are available to support the crisis support operations?

The remainder of this guide serves as an outline and a checklist to use in planning crisis support services for the extraordinary event.

Organizational Mechanics

A. Establish and staff a crisis support operations center (command center).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a location and obtain permission and/or access. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of the event will determine the proximity to "ground zero". However, the crisis support command center should not within the perimeter of the disaster area. The crisis support operations center must be secure from the media. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operations center will require the following: 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relative ease of access 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilities 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multiple phone lines 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work surfaces/chairs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Computer(s) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tracking board 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Portable TV to monitor news event coverage 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Break room for rest, snacks, meals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider other communication equipment, i.e. ham radios and operators 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HVAC 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other equipment needed for all responding team members: 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pagers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ VHF radios 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cell phones 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally, adequate space will be available at or near the command center for interventions. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One-on-ones 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crisis management briefings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demobilizations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defusings 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One central phone number should be provided to contact the crisis support operations center. Set up voice mail if roll-over lines are not 	

available.	
B. Adopt a mechanism to identify team members.	
• Identification badges	
• Identifying garb, for example	
○ Wind breakers/jackets	
○ Caps	
○ Arm bands	
○ Vests	
C. Designate a crisis support Incident Coordinator.	
• If the crisis support team is providing round-the-clock availability, more than one individual must be identified.	
• Staff one crisis support Incident Coordinator per shift.	
D. Designate a Team Dispatcher to perform the following.	
• Team member call downs	
• Contacts with out-of-area teams	
• Scheduling for team members for intervention needs	
• Monitoring utilization/over utilization of crisis support personnel	
E. Obtain administrative staff (support staff) to assist with the following.	
• Logistics	
• Procurement	
• Tracking/logging personnel hours	
• Travel arrangements for out-of-area teams	
• Lodging arrangements for out-of-area teams	
• Maintaining data on interventions	
• Copying/printing of materials	
F. Designate a finance coordinator. This may be in addition to one of the previously identified roles. This individual is responsible to maintain the following types of records:	
• Local team expenses	
• Out of area team expenses	
• Expenses including but not limited to:	
• Meals	

• Lodging	
• Airfare	
• Gasoline	
• Car/van rental	
• Cell phone/pager rental	
• Other rental expenses	
• Office supply or other purchases	
• Long distance calls	
• Miscellaneous expenses	
G. The availability of the same personnel to consistently fill administrative & coordination roles will increase the efficiency of crisis support operations and decrease potential communication problems.	
• Shift lengths must be appropriate, however, and the need for rest and time away from the event must be considered.	
• Crisis support operations center personnel should discuss with their employers the ability to receive time off or reassignment to crisis support duties for the duration of the crisis support response. This discussion should occur early in the response.	
H. Crisis support personnel who were intensely involved in disaster operations should not be in administrative roles or attempt to do crisis support interventions.	
Logistics	
A. Assess needs early: Do not begin formulating interventions until needs and potential needs have been identified.	
• Make notes of all available information regarding the incident	
• Think long term	
• Is there any estimate of the anticipated length of the response and recovery phases?	
• Is there any estimate of the number of personnel and agencies involved?	
B. If possible, obtain information on each agency responding to the event so that adequate services and follow-up may be offered. Some agencies may respond initially but may not have on-going involvement in the	

operation. Maintain a log or tracking device.	
C. Are there agencies involved in the response that have internal crisis support teams? Attempt to communicate/coordinate with these teams.	
D. Communicate and coordinate with the local mental health center. Join forces to provide services to respective populations.	
E. Communicate and coordinate with agency internal peer support groups or chaplain programs.	
F. Determine short term goals and priorities for crisis support activities.	
G. Develop an action plan for the next 6, 12, 24, 48 hours and beyond. Coordinate with incident action plan to avoid conflicts.	
H. Brief crisis support personnel on incident operation and crisis support plan.	
I. Report to and coordinate with the appropriate individual in the incident command structure. This may be under the Rehab Sector, the Safety Officer, or other designated individual. Identify key contact personnel.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always work within the incident command structure. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be advocates for the responders to the incident. However, beware of becoming involved in "fire fights" over turf or methods. During the disaster is probably not the best time to attempt to develop an ideal structure. Remain sensitive to the pressures and overall operational logistical considerations. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain frequent communication with the ICS officer at mutually agreed upon intervals. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not interfere with operations. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe established perimeters. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not attempt to intervene with responders actively engaged in service. 	
J. Request assistance from outside teams based on need.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify if local/regional resources will be adequate to cover the event. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If outside resources are needed, determine when they will be needed. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine/define which activities and/or locations outside teams will assume 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mechanism to verify credentials and level of training of crisis support teams, mental health professionals, or others prior to accepting offers of assistance. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General considerations in selecting team members for disaster response include: 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Choose the most highly experienced crisis support team members. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disasters provide a poor learning environment and a high level of skill is required. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendations for crisis support team members responding to a disaster include the following training: 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual Crisis Intervention 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Group CISM 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Advanced CISM 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Strategic Response to Crisis 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Psychotraumatology training 	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Disaster response training 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For assistance in contacting out-of-region Teams, call the ICISF Hot Line at (410) 313-2473. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When multiple teams are in the area, conduct meetings for information sharing and planning. Keep all teams up-to-date with the current situational status. 	
K. For visiting teams provide, at a minimum, the following.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area maps 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of important contact numbers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis support reaction handouts 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions for receipts for reimbursement if anticipated. Tracking up front will greatly ease the process later. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing re: local hazards & public health issues (e.g. drink only bottled H2O) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timesheets 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts for stress management & self-care of crisis support team members 	
L. Consider other possible resources for crisis support teams	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are military vehicles potentially available for transport of team members? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will a cellular phone company donate phones and air time? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will a pager service donate pagers? (digital preferred with ability to 	

transmit text messages)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will car rental companies donate cars or vans for transportation of team members? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will airlines donate tickets or offer reduced fees? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will local hotels donate rooms or offer reduced rates? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will local fire departments offer sleeping facilities? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will local restaurants offer to supply free meals? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will local gyms or health clubs offer free use of facilities to crisis support & disaster teams? 	
M. Determine what other agencies are doing and how to coordinate, including the State Office of Emergency Management, Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.	
N. Determine availability of schools and churches for possible space needs for interventions and shelters.	
O. Coordinate a list of community resources to provide to callers.	
P. Establish a mechanism with ICS staff to funnel responders through a demobilization or defusing center based on the incident circumstances.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture all personnel 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer services, but don't demand participation. Respect the right of refusal. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply all responders with written information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Critical incident stress reactions ○ Method to contact crisis support personnel if needed ○ Specialized info on going home from disaster 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep responding personnel informed regarding future/further crisis support services 	
Q. When considering scaling back operations, keep a crisis support command staff member in place to answer the phone. Have crisis support team members on call who can respond to a request. Folding up operations too quickly sends a negative message to the community.	
Keys to Successful Interventions	
A. Continue to assess needs.	
B. Be prepared to modify, adapt and overcome	

C. Target all services to meet responders needs, not crisis support team member needs. It is easy to lose sight of what the responders need rather than the team member or administration need to "do something" or be involved.	
D. Remain flexible to meet the needs of a changing situation.	
E. The crisis support team response to extraordinary events tends to be overreaction. Slow response and select interventions based on needs.	
F. Out-of-area teams need to be aware of organizational, cultural, or structural issues that may affect interactions and interventions. Also brief teams on local racial, ethnic, political or "turf" issues.	
G. Timing is essential and usual CISM time frames are altered. Formal debriefings may not be conducted until weeks after the close of the event, if ever.	
H. Design the right intervention in the face of on-going operations. Responders who must continue to return to the scene may not be best served by examining their emotional reactions.	
I. Do not use up all of your crisis support team resources at the beginning. Pace your response and plan for staffing various shifts.	
J. Recognize and respect the phases of response to a disaster.	
K. Heroic phase	
L. Honeymoon phase	
M. Disillusionment phase	
N. Reconstructive phase	
O. Effective CISM disaster services are:	
• Timely	
• Efficient	
• Consistent	
• Thorough	
P. Never do group work under field conditions.	
Q. Always consider politics to be an issue including: administration, unions, and different departments. Stay out of politics & remain neutral on political issues.	

Pearls for Interventions

A. On-scene support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of personnel at the scene 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of individuals showing obvious signs of distress 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice to command staff 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist primary victims as necessary 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to function is more important than any display of emotion 	
B. One-on-one most used intervention in a disaster	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content and depth will vary with the circumstances and timing 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not probe those still in the operations mode 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the seven phase model in mind and modify according to the situation 	
C. Decompression for ongoing operations during a disaster	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique activity for events in which operations will continue over a long period (at least days) and responders will be returning to the disaster for multiple shifts 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transition from the disaster scene to routine activities of home or regular work site 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow for ventilation if needed 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide education re: techniques for acute stress management 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep responders functioning without endangering long-term psychological health 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate level of distress 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule for each group at end of each duty shift 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technique 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction/Fact 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brief, concise 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "What was your job today?" 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reaction/Symptom phase 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Object is not to encourage emotion but to allow 	

expression if needed	
▪ "How did things go today?"	
▪ "Have you noticed any unusual reactions today?"	
▪ "Does anything stand out as particularly bad today?"	
▪ "Does anything stand out that was particularly good today?"	
▪ Normalize symptoms	
○ Teaching phase	
▪ Review possible reactions briefly	
▪ Review acute stress management tips	
○ Re-entry phase	
▪ Develop a plan of action for each individual until next duty shift	
• Further one-on-ones as needed	
○ Determine fitness for duty/need for lighter duty	
• Keep intervention relatively brief. Respect level of fatigue and repetition of intervention after each duty shift	
D. Crisis Management Briefing	
• Review of pertinent facts	
• Review of psychological dynamics	
• Review of resources	
E. Demobilization	
• Plan early	
• Appropriate use: disengaged units who will not ordinarily be returning to the scene	
• Hold in a secure area (decrease distractions/no media)	
• Follow the model	
○ Provide a transition between the intensity of the disaster and the routine	
○ Not a debriefing or a defusing	
○ A brief information session designed to take the "edge" off the incident and assist the return to the routine	
• Gain Command approval/cooperation	

F. Defusings	
• Goals	
○ Lessen impact	
○ Restore to normal duties	
○ Prepare to return to home or duty with a lighter emotional load	
• Modify seven phases as needed	
G. If CISDs are considered appropriate:	
• Obtain buy-in from management	
• Schedule "on-duty" as much as possible	
• Communicate schedule widely	
• Invite all participants	
• Plan around homogenous groups	
• Separate groups for significant others	
• The incident needs to be "over" prior to debriefings. The time frame will vary with the type of disaster.	
• Consider:	
○ Time of day	
○ Weekend vs. weekday	
○ Location (in or out of disaster area)	
○ Curfew areas	
• For out of town responders, liaison with their crisis support resources back home to plan for their needs when they return home	
• Modifications of CISD for non-emergency personnel	
○ Provide services/outreach as necessary in conjunction and consultation with other provider groups regarding mental health centers	
○ Explain what a CISD is and is not	
○ Change the fact question	
○ Keep the focus on the incident. Do not let other life events/factors into the discussion	
○ Cognitive reframing is important i.e., "Is there something you can take from this experience...?"	
• Modifications for children	

○ Use age appropriate techniques	
• Keep the session shorter	
• Consider drawing, collage or other art form expression	
• May include parents	
H. Alternative interventions	
• Select based on needs, numbers, circumstances, and other considerations	
• Strategies	
○ Large group education programs	
○ Media presentations	
○ Church/community group education meetings	
○ Referrals	
○ EMDR for individuals	
I. Do not mix rescuers and primary victims together in interventions	
• Rescuers and primary victims have different needs	
• Primary victims tend to respond to their own needs much earlier and don't have image armor.	
J. Follow-up services	
• Important to provide	
• Will vary depending on the incident	
• Anniversary dates are significant in disasters and catastrophic events	
K. Debriefing/team support services to all team members who participated is required.	
Miscellaneous	
A. Be cautious in discussing confidential information over cell phones or radios. The media is listening.	
B. Team members should beware of potential violence, lootings, etc. depending on the nature of the disaster and plan accordingly.	
C. Refer the press/media to the identified public information officer in the incident command structure for all information requests	
D. If the press/media requests general information on CIS reactions or process, refer to the crisis support Incident Coordinator. This individual	

should:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer only general information on usual and anticipated reactions. Do not give specific examples from this incident. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that confidentiality is the foundation of the crisis support process 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide press/media representatives with a copy of the stress reaction handouts and brochure 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a short informational handout on the benefits of crisis support services 	
E. Provide survival tips for crisis support team members	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your ego at the door 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think teamwork 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review priorities frequently. Whose needs are you meeting? It is easy to get lost in the trees and lose sight of the overall objectives. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat in moderation & frequency 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power-up when the opportunity presents 	



Addendum Practical Lessons Learned in Disasters

Though difficult to define, a disaster exists when an event demands greater attention than local resources can give.

People don't prepare for disasters because disasters are low-probability events and people give disaster planning a low priority. Increasing the public's knowledge will not necessarily change behavior.

We see evacuations as a collective effort. However, the individual sees it as a small group activity and will often not leave a disaster site until they are assured that their family and friends will also be able to leave. Appeals to preparation must be made through trusted and respected citizen groups.

While individuals will rise to an occasion, the same cannot be said for organizations. Organizations are often slow to respond because of a lack of cooperation and/or poor pre-incident planning.

Viewpoints differ regarding recovery. The government is realistic. Individuals are more idealistic. We determine victimization by the losses of the victim. The victims tend to judge their losses against what others have lost or gained.

Those outside the mainstream of the community have the most trouble recovering. These can be people unaffiliated with a church, older women, singles, and ethnic minorities.

Relatives are the most help in recovery. The elderly will recover better emotionally, but not financially.

A lot of problems attributed to disasters existed prior to, or were not the result of disasters. If 25% of a given population is in need of counseling after a disaster, they are likely the 25% who needed service prior to the disaster.

Conclusions

- A. Groups and individuals define disaster differently.
- B. Disasters are not larger everyday incidents.
- C. Despite medical drills, research shows that again and again the less injured are treated first.
- D. There is a difference between disaster and catastrophe.

Catastrophe

Most of residential areas impacted. Friends cannot go to friends or relatives for help because friends and relatives are victims, too.

Facilities and operational bases do not survive. Outside leadership must come in because the local leaders are often themselves victims.

Community functions cannot be carried on - everything is interrupted and the community shuts down. People have lost both homes and jobs.

Disaster

Victims can go to friends or relatives for help.

Local leadership continues to function and operational bases survive. While outsiders may provide assistance, control largely remains in the hands of the locals.

Much of community business carries on. Many stores are open, most jobs continue. Usually victims will either lose job or home, not both.

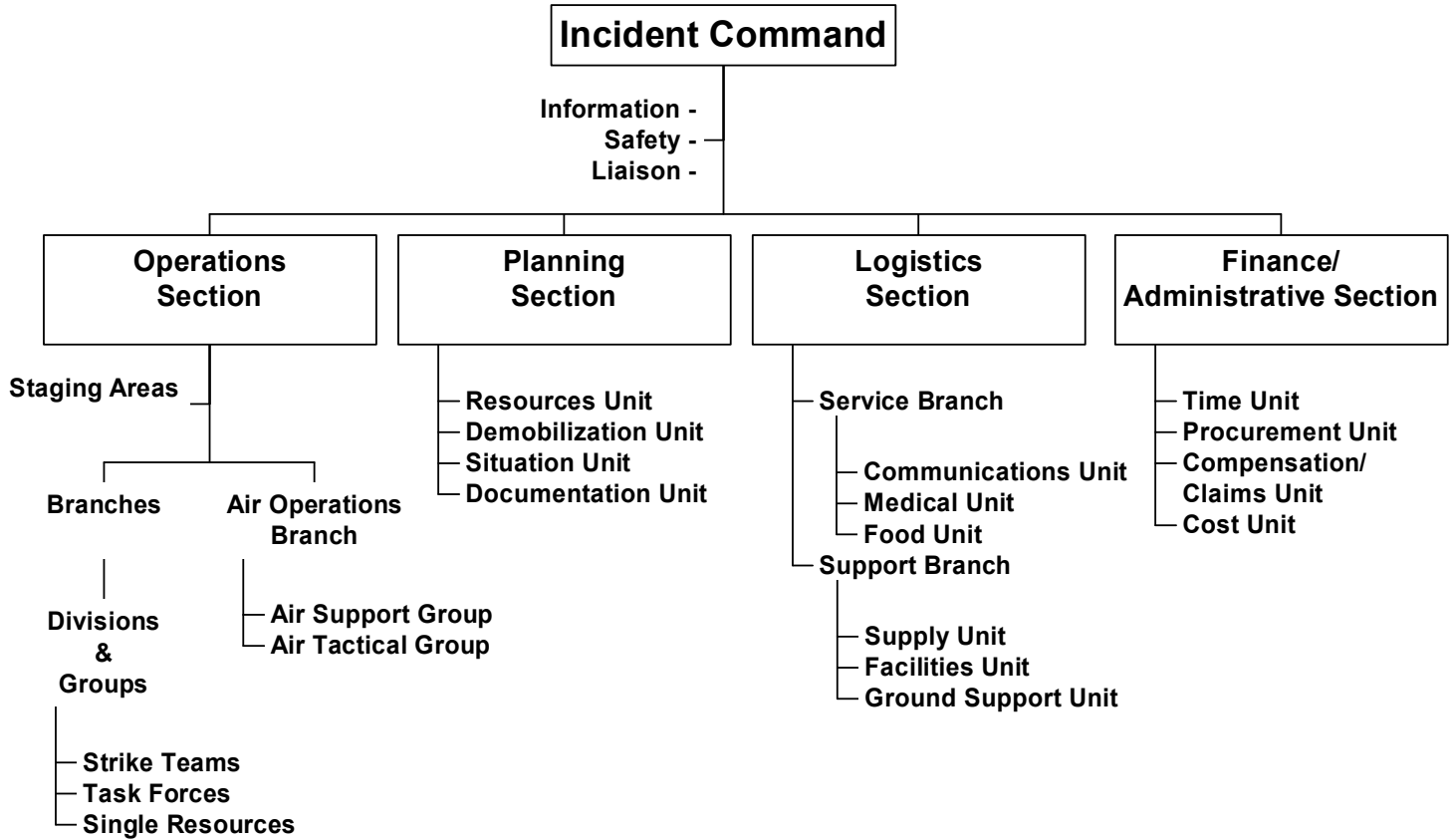
Regarding mitigation and preparedness: All planning should reflect that disasters are different from everyday emergencies. Planning must be multiple hazards in focus. Planning must include all four time-phases: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

All disaster plans should have their focus on general principles rather than details. Base your planning strategies on research data, not on a collection of "war stories". Plans should be built on interagency cooperation and coordination rather than control.

Plans should reflect the assumption that victims in a disaster setting will react well rather than badly.

Notes from paper "Preparedness and Disaster: A Complex Relationship," E.L. Quarantelli, Ph.D.

Incident Command System Organization





Colorado Crisis Support Network Request for Mutual Aid Information Sheet

Team Name:

Team Base Location _____ City: _____

State: _____

Team Contact Number: _____

Team Coordinator Number: _____ Phone #: _____

Team Clinical Coordinator Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Number of crisis support team Members: _____

List the professional groups served by your crisis support team:

List any other groups served by your crisis support team:

What model of crisis support/CISM intervention is used by your team?

What are your requirements to participate on the crisis support team?

Has your team responded to any major incident? If so, list.

Year your crisis support team was formed: _____

How many of your team members have completed ICISF:

Group CISM training _____

Advanced CISM training _____

Individual Crisis Intervention _____

CISM Application With Children _____

Other CISM training (please specify name of training and length of program) _____

Can your team finance deployment to our location? ____ Yes ____ No



Colorado Crisis Support Network Mutual Aid Instructions

- All mutual aid response must be pre-approved and requested by the local team.
- All onsite and local crisis support activities must be under the direction of the local crisis support team Incident Coordinator.
- The local crisis support team will provide all materials to be distributed during interventions
- All mutual aid responders are required to check in and check out each day with the local crisis support team Incident Coordinator.
- Mutual aid response will typically be requested/accepted as a 3-member crisis support team and will include 1 masters prepared mental health professional and 2 peers. Mixed gender teams are preferred. Mutual aid teams will usually be deployed as a unit.
- Mutual aid response teams will be required to complete data reports on all interventions provided.
- Mutual aid response teams will be required to complete data reports on all interventions provided.
- Mutual aid response teams are requested to deploy their most experienced team members.

- Local crisis support team coordinating crisis response

-
- Contact number for local crisis support Incident Coordinator

Phone #

Pager #

Cell #