

## *Your Agency Responsibilities*

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Your agency will be asked to cover expenses such as travel and meals and lodging, if needed. There is no charge for the services of the team.

Your agency should request attendance at the intervention by all personnel from emergency and healthcare organizations who were involved in the incident. Provide a comfortable space that is free from interruption and is large enough to accommodate personnel and team members. Educational programs and debriefings are also available for spouses and significant others.

## *In Conclusion*

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The crisis support process is available to any emergency service organization or hospital. All information discussed during interventions is restricted and will not be discussed with those not at the session. Only general information regarding the team functions and response process will be released.

Member teams in the Colorado Crisis Support Network are listed below with their base locations. To request a crisis support team, contact a team dispatcher at one of the following numbers:

**Mayflower Crisis Support Team** Denver, CO (303) 788-6889

**Centennial Crisis Support Team** Greeley, CO (970) 350-9600

**Southern Colorado Crisis Support Team** Colorado Springs, CO (719) 576-1200

**High Country Critical Incident Team** Breckenridge, CO (970) 668-8301

**San Luis Valley Critical Incident Team** Alamosa, CO (719) 589-5807

**Triad Team** Glenwood Springs, CO (970) 920-5310 (970) 947-5880 P

**Arkansas Valley Crisis Support Team** Pueblo, CO (719) 553-2502

For more information on the Colorado Crisis Support Network or teams, contact the HealthONE EMS office at (303) 788-6236.

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# COLORADO CRISIS SUPPORT NETWORK

## The Problem

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Emergency services and healthcare personnel have become increasingly aware of the toll that unique occupational stressors take on the quality of their lives. The nature of their jobs may expose these individuals routinely, or periodically, to stressful events which they may or may not be able to work through satisfactorily on their own.

Factors that cause stress to one individual may be non-stressful for another, but research has shown that emergency service and healthcare personnel may be affected by stress at some time in their career.

Responses to stress may be immediate and incident specific, may be delayed for a period of time after an incident, or may be cumulative, building over time and can include many incidents. Multiple factors affect an individual's response to stress and include factors specific to the stressor, the individual's personal qualities, past experiences, and the resources available.

Certain events, such as the death of a child, the death of a co-worker, and multiple casualty incidents, may be particularly stressful for emergency or healthcare workers. Any of these events, plus a host of others, may cause or contribute to a critical incident for an emergency or a healthcare worker or for a group of personnel.

A critical incident has been defined by Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell as "an unusually challenging event that has the potential to create positive growth or significant human distress." Dr. Mitchell is an instructor and author on stress and disaster psychology.

## A Solution

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Crisis support teams were established to provide a form of crisis intervention, specifically designed to help emergency and healthcare workers reduce the number of psychological casualties among their ranks.

Through the crisis support process, emergency and healthcare personnel are provided with tools to potentially mitigate overwhelming emotional and physical symptoms. The crisis support process also addresses very real issues that contribute to the loss of valuable employees, thereby salvaging not only careers, but resources, knowledge, expertise, and human caring.



## The Process

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A crisis support team typically consists of a three-member response team. Team members are volunteers who are familiar with emergency and healthcare services. They are carefully selected from the following groups:

- \* Mental health professionals, psychologists, and social workers
- \* EMS personnel
- \* Law enforcement officers
- \* Fire service personnel
- \* Dispatchers
- \* EMS instructors
- \* Nurses
- \* Search and rescue personnel
- \* Other emergency or healthcare responders

Following application and selection, team members receive training in the area of stress and the crisis support process. Team members are committed to the recognition of critical incident stress in emergency and healthcare workers and to providing a means to improve the quality of life for its victims.

A debriefing session is optimally conducted 24 to 72 hours following an incident. Generally, it should not be postponed for more than one week. On occasion, psychological intervention may be needed at the scene. Also, a defusing may be held the same day of the incident, before personnel leave the duty shift. One-on-one intervention and other group informational sessions are also available.

## Accessing the Team

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A number of crisis support teams have been established in Colorado. These teams may be utilized by any emergency service agency or hospital. A representative of an agency requesting assistance may contact the team nearest to your location. You will be asked the following information:

- \* Your name and telephone number
- \* Your agency name, address, and telephone number
- \* The nature of the incident
- \* The perceived urgency of the situation, i.e., requiring immediate intervention, defusing, or a scheduled debriefing

A dispatcher will call you to obtain further information and to arrange details of the intervention, such as location and the number of personnel expected. If you are unsure of which team to call, you may contact the Mayflower dispatcher at (303) 788-6889 to assist you in locating the team closest to your area.