

Critical Incident Response

Number: H-7

Revision:

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1.0 POLICY

Providing support following a critical incident will assist in minimizing the chances that involved personnel will suffer from the negative physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral reactions that may occur.

2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines that shall be uniformly applied to the management of critical incidents that may occur in the course of Town business. The Town will manage critical incident situations by providing personnel with critical incident stress management programs and opportunities. One tool that may be utilized to manage critical incidents is the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP). The EAP as well as other programs and services may be utilized to provide personnel with information and counseling on reactions to the trauma associated with critical incidents and assist in deterrence of negative responses.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 Critical Incident – An incident that is unusual, violent, and involves a perceived threat to, or actual loss of human life that may overwhelm an employee's normal coping mechanisms and cause psychological distress.
- 4.2 Employee Assistance Program – The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential employee benefit program that assists employees with personal problems and/or work-related issues that may affect their job performance, health, mental health and emotional well-being.
- 4.3 Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP) – Any individual who is licensed as a mental health professional.
- 4.4 Corporate Health Partner (CHP) – A licensed health care provider authorized by the Town who can diagnose and/or treat Town employees.

5.0 ORGANIZATIONAL RULES

- 5.1 During any period where it is reasonable to believe that involved personnel may experience physical, cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral reactions to a critical incident, the employee's department will refer the employee to the Human Resources Director who will coordinate referring the employee to the Town's CHP for evaluation. This initial evaluation may result in further referral to the Town's EAP or to the Town's QMHP for further evaluation. In some instances, the Town may choose to send the employee to see the QMHP for evaluation instead of, or in advance of, the employee seeing the Town's CHP.

- 5.2 The Town may engage a QMHP to conduct a group, or individual, debriefing session for all employees involved in a critical incident. All involved personnel shall be required to attend such a debriefing.

6.0 PROCEDURES

- 6.1 Supervisors and Department Heads involved with employees at the scene of a critical incident will interact with their employees and acknowledge the potential stress caused by the incident and ensure employees are immediately physically and emotionally supported.
- 6.2 As soon as feasible, the Department Head will notify Human Resources of the critical incident and the need for debriefing services. Department Heads will provide Human Resources with a list of all employees from their department involved in the critical incident, so that notation can be made in the employee's confidential medical personnel file and so Human Resources can begin tracking the involved employees for potential consideration under other policies of the Town including the Town's policy on Workers Compensation benefits.
- 6.3 Employees will be notified in sufficient time to attend debriefing meetings and/or one-on-one meetings with a QMHP, the Town's CHP, or the EAP provider. Participation in these meetings is required unless the employee is specifically excused by the Town Manager. An employee may be excused from attending these sessions if sufficient medical documentation is submitted to the Human Resources Director to show the employee is seeking individual treatment from a QMHP, or the employee is receiving ongoing medical treatment from a qualified health care provider for a health condition that occurred during the critical incident.
- 6.4 The Human Resources Department will provide Departments with marketing materials and flyers regarding the EAP to post internally. Departments will ensure marketing materials and posters reminding employees of the services of the EAP are readily available and visible within the department.
- 6.5 Departments are responsible for conducting departmental specific training pertaining to critical incidents and the reactions that may occur following a critical incident.
- 6.6 Supervisors are responsible for monitoring the behavior of their employees for any signs that suggest critical incident stressors may be disrupting an employee's individual job performance. Supervisors should bring any such matters to the attention of their Department Head for further discussion with Human Resources.

7.0 APPENDIX, APPENDICES

None