

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
PERSONNEL**

Personnel

Part 227 Personnel Relations and Services

Chapter 7 Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program

227 FW 7

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OVERVIEW

7.1 What is the purpose of this chapter?

A. This chapter establishes a peer-based, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that supplements the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The National Wildlife Refuge System Division of Refuge Law Enforcement (DRLE) manages the program in collaboration with the EAP.

B. It also establishes the *FWS Critical Incident Stress Management Handbook*, which employees and supervisors should review for more detailed information on accessing the program and how it works.

C. The program serves as a resource for:

(1) Employees who may be uncomfortable with a formal EAP consultation, and

(2) Supervisors who want to provide stress management and suicide prevention education to their employees.

7.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter applies to all Service employees. We will make the program available to family members, as appropriate.

7.3 What are the authorities for this chapter?

A. Civil Service Regulations, Federal Employees' Health, Counseling, and Work/Life Programs (5 CFR 792).

B. Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 91-616).

C. Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act, as amended (Public Law 92-255).

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D. Employee Assistance Programs Relating to Drug Abuse and Alcohol Abuse (5 U.S.C. 7904).

E. Office of Personnel Management's Federal Personnel Manual (FPM), Chapter 792, Employee Counseling Services Programs.

F. 370 Departmental Manual (DM) 792.8, Federal Employees' Health and Counseling Programs, HIV/AIDS in the Workplace.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

7.4 What are the elements of the program? This program:

A. Is comprised of an educated peer support structure, CISM techniques, suicide awareness and prevention, and Law Enforcement officer/firefighter mental wellness. For more detailed information about the components, see the *FWS Critical Incident Stress Management Handbook*.

B. Uses a peer-based process for employees to help each other and to guide each other to professional services when needed.

C. Is not a substitute for services provided by the EAP or for other professional counseling.

7.5 Why is the program necessary?

A. We recognize stress, and particularly critical incident stress, as a potential hazard for our employees. Any employee can be subject to the effects of stress. Employees engaged in firefighting, law enforcement, or other emergency services or events may be more susceptible to these hazards by the very nature of their duties and experiences. Employees who are involved in serious accidents are also more susceptible to stress.

B. Stress can lead to physical and mental health issues that can negatively impact worker productivity and employee quality of life. Left unaddressed, these issues can worsen and can lead to missed work, damaged employee relationships, and loss of life from poor health and even suicide.

C. We intend to help deal with these impacts in a caring and professional manner by providing assistance to employees and their family members through this program.

7.6 What outcome does the Service hope to achieve as a result of implementing the program?

A. We aim to:

(1) Help de-stigmatize mental health issues and make it easier for employees to recognize such issues in themselves and others,

(2) Equip employees with skills to help themselves and others,

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- (3) Encourage employees to seek further care when necessary, and
- (4) Boost the efforts already provided by the EAP.

B. Through this program, we seek to address the threat suicide poses to our employees by making suicide awareness and prevention training a priority.

RESPONSIBILITIES

7.7 Who is responsible for the CISM program? See Table 7-1.

Table 7-1: Responsibilities for the Critical Incident Stress Management Program

These employees...	Are responsible for...
A. The Director	Approving or declining to approve Servicewide policy.
B. The Chief, Division of Human Capital	Working with the Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System to oversee the overall management of the program.
C. The Chief - National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) through the Division of Refuge Law Enforcement (DRLE)	(1) Administering the program by providing staff support for policy development and implementation, and (2) Designating a National Critical Incident Stress Coordinator.
D. Regional Directors	Establishing and administering the program in the Regions.
E. National Critical Incident Stress Coordinator in the DRLE	(1) Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the program; (2) Developing, revising, and updating this policy and the accompanying handbook; (3) Developing and identifying program-based training for employees; (4) Acting as the liaison with the national EAP Administrator (see 227 FW 4) and programs from other Federal agencies; (5) In consultation with the appropriate managers in the Regions and at Headquarters, making final decisions regarding the selection of employees to serve in the program as Peer Support Members (PSM); (6) Monitoring deployments of peer support teams; (7) Organizing the annual Regional Critical Incident Stress Coordinators meeting with the other Coordinators; and

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These employees...	Are responsible for...
	(8) Coordinating the initial PSM training and refresher training.
F. Regional Refuge Chiefs	In consultation with the National Coordinator, designating a Regional Critical Incident Stress Coordinator for their Regions.
G. Regional Critical Incident Stress Coordinators	Working with the National Coordinator and the Regional Refuge Law Enforcement Chiefs to oversee the program at the Regional level.
H. Supervisors	<p>(1) Ensuring that employees are aware of the mental wellness, peer support, and CISM resources available to them; and</p> <p>(2) Fostering a work environment that helps to de-stigmatize mental health issues and encourages employees to seek help for themselves and for co-workers.</p>
I. Employees	<p>(1) Monitoring their own mental wellness and taking advantage of the services offered by the program when they feel it is appropriate for themselves; and</p> <p>(2) Watching out for fellow co-workers and being aware of these services in order to assist when needed.</p>

LOGISTICS

7.8 How are PSMs selected and trained? See the *FWS Critical Incident Stress Management Handbook* for detailed information about how PSMs are selected and trained.

7.9 What are the CISM notification and activation procedures? PSMs may be notified about program needs in the following ways:

A. Employees seeking assistance can contact a designated PSM directly for confidential discussions and support. Also, co-workers can confidentially contact a PSM on behalf of a co-worker if they feel he/she may be having stress-related issues and request that the PSM reach out to that employee to offer assistance. See the *FWS Critical Incident Stress Management Handbook*, Section 2,2, for detailed information on confidentiality.

B. Employees seeking assistance may send an email to peersupport@fws.gov to request the help of a PSM. Any email sent to this address will be held as a confidential request between the person who sent it and the PSM.

C. The National or a Regional Coordinator may activate PSMs as part of a CISM team to respond to small, localized incidents or large, and even widespread, incidents.

D. The National or a Regional Coordinator may notify a PSM and ask him/her to respond to an employee involved in a critical incident.

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7.10 How is the program funded? Headquarters NWRS will administer and oversee the program budget. NWRS covers costs associated with administration, training, travel for deployment, deployments, and overtime. The PSM's duty station must continue to pay for his/her time by paying the base salary.

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PRINCIPAL DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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