

Australian Capital Territory

# Corrections Management (Critical Incident Stress Debrief) Policy 2011

Notifiable instrument NI2011-120

made under the

***Corrections Management Act 2007*, section 14(1) (Corrections policies and operating procedures)**

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## 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Corrections Management (Critical Incident Stress Debrief) Policy 2011*.

## 2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after it is notified.

## 3 Policy

I make the

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEF POLICY

attached to this instrument, to facilitate the effective and efficient management of correctional services.

## 4 Revocation

This instrument revokes notifiable instruments NI2007-449 and NI2009-125.

[Signed by]

Barry Folpp  
A/g Executive Director  
ACT Corrective Services  
18 February 2011



**ACT Corrective Services  
All Facilities and Operations**



**CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEF  
POLICY**

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**Purpose**

To outline the policy and principles underpinning the practice of conducting Critical Incident Stress Debrief (CISD) following a serious incident within an ACT correctional centre.

**Authority**

Legislation

*Corrections Management Act 2007*, section 14.

*Public Sector Management Act 1994*.

*Work Safety Act 2008*.

**Policy**

**Principles**

This policy recognises that a critical incident can be a stressful experience for both prisoners and staff and provides for the necessary support and counselling for all those involved. The nature of a correctional centre necessitates that corrections officers, other staff and authorised visitors may be exposed to unique and potentially stressful situations.

Under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, public service employees are to be provided with safe and healthy working conditions.

Under the *Work Safety Act 2008*, ACTCS is required to take all reasonable practicable steps to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its employees.

ACTCS has a duty of care to prisoners accommodated within its correctional centres. Providing an environment that is safe and secure is a requirement of this duty of care.

**Critical Incidents**

A critical incident is any situation that causes an individual to experience strong emotional or physical reactions. These reactions are critical incident stress reactions when they affect a person during, soon after an incident, or some time after the

conclusion of an incident but can be directly attributed to it. Effective Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and individual counselling may help to reduce the severity of critical incident stress reactions

Situations which may be classified as a critical incident in a correctional centre include:

- hostage/siege situation;
- witnessing a homicide;
- riots;
- assaults to a corrections officer;
- fighting a serious fire;
- discharging a firearm;
- serious threat made to a corrections officer;
- discovering a deceased person;
- discovering a grievously injured person;
- witnessing or discovering a person involved in serious self-harm;
- needle-stick injuries;
- exposure to blood and/or body fluids; and/or
- administering first aid.

The list is not exhaustive and judgment needs to be exercised in determining whether an incident is a critical incident. The CO3, Deputy Superintendent or Superintendent may identify any incident as a critical incident.

Assistance after a critical incident will be provided to all persons, including corrections officers, non-correctional staff, authorised visitors, and prisoners that may have been exposed to the incident.

In the case of staff members, this assistance will be provided by peer support staff, the ACTCS Senior Psychologist and the Employee Assistance Provider (EAP). Prisoners will have access to mental health staff within the correctional centre.

### **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)**

CISD is a confidential discussion about the critical incident with the staff members involved. It is an immediate crisis intervention and educational process. It is not intended to be a substitute for individual psychotherapy. It is therefore important to recognise that CISD is part of a package of a wide range of interventions including access to the EAP's individual counselling, ACTCS trained Peer Support Officers and the ACTCS Senior Psychologist. Corrections officers who are affected by an incident are encouraged to make use of the EAP's individual counselling though this is voluntary and will remain confidential.

A CISD is not an operational debrief; operational debriefs occur separately. It incorporates discussion of personal reactions to an incident and is conducted by an EAP psychologist.

Non-correctional staff and authorised visitors who have witnessed a critical incident will be invited to attend the CISD for corrections officers where this is appropriate. ACT Corrections Health and ACT Forensic Health will be invited to attend the CISD.

However, where the EAP psychologist, CO3, Deputy Superintendent, or Superintendent does not believe that this is in the best interests of the corrections officer(s) involved, non-correctional staff will be encouraged to participate in their own CISD.

If staff (corrections officers or non-correctional staff) are injured during the incident, medical care will be arranged immediately. CISD will take place as soon as possible thereafter.

### **Operational Debrief**

The Superintendent shall conduct an operational debrief of all serious incidents within a correctional centre. An operational debrief constitutes a review by management, in conjunction with the staff involved, of the following factors arising from a critical incident:

- the actions taken by staff before/during/after the incident;
- whether ACTCS policy and legislative requirements have been complied with; and
- whether current operational procedures were effective in dealing with the incident.

It should be noted that not all incidents require an operational debrief. For all incidents, the extent of the operational debrief shall be determined by the Deputy Superintendent after consideration of all the factors associated with the particular incident.

### **Prisoner Support**

Any prisoner who wishes to seek support may make a request to the Manager of the Crisis Support Unit or the Chaplain. A prisoner who witnessed the event, or appears to be affected by the incident, may also be referred to Mental Health ACT for assessment.

### **Forms and templates**

Nil

### **Related policies and procedures**

Incident Response Policy

Incident Response Procedure

Code <Restricted> - Fire

Code <Restricted> - Staff member assaulted/at risk of assault

Code <Restricted> - Prisoners fighting/assault

Code <Restricted> - Medical attendance required

Code <Restricted> - Escape/Attempted escape

Code <Restricted> - Prisoner disturbance/riot

Code <Restricted> - Hazardous material spillage/major gas leak

Code <Restricted> - Breach of perimeter security by external source

Peer Support Policy