



## ACFAS Advisory Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

### **Overall Recommendation:**

There is convincing evidence that the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) model is harmful. CISD should not be recommended for rescuers following a traumatic event.

**Standards:** None.

**Guidelines:** There is no convincing evidence that psychological debriefing or group debriefing are effective in reducing PTSD. There is evidence that the CISD process may have deleterious effects. As such the CISD process should not be used for rescuers following a traumatic event. (Level II)

**Options:** None.

### **Questions addressed**

What is the science in favor or against the Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) model?  
Should CISD be recommended for rescuers following a traumatic event?

### **Introduction/Overview:**

CISD aims to modify the cognitive structure of the event “through retelling of experiences and emotional release.” The goal is to “reduce distress and prevent the emergency of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).” CISD is a “7-phase, structured group discussion, usually provided 1 to 10 days post crisis, and designed to mitigate acute symptoms, assess the need for follow-up, and if possible provide a sense of post-crisis psychological closure.” Several authors and organizations have expressed concern that CISD is not based on a sound scientific foundation.

### **Summary of Scientific Foundation:**

There is no convincing evidence that psychological debriefing or group debriefing are effective in reducing PTSD. IN addition studies have shown that those who do not participate in CISD actually have greater reduction in symptoms than those who do participate. Several studies have shown detrimental effects from the CISD process.