



## Critical Incident Response Services

Today's ever-changing workplace experiences unique opportunities and challenges. Challenges can include isolated traumas such as natural disasters, workplace accidents, death and workplace change as well as chronic stressors such as COVID, racial trauma, political stress and civil unrest. When facing acute or chronic stress, it is common for people to experience a wide range of emotional and physical reactions which can negatively impact the workplace. Optum can provide on-site and virtual support in response to a broad range of planned or unplanned events with the purpose of helping individuals affected by such incidents and enabling employees to better cope with their stress responses and promote workplace resilience.

### Accessing Critical Incident Support Services

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Optum leverages a multi-component model of care that aligns with internationally recognised standards and evidence-based practices. Trauma response can occur as a delayed reaction, sometimes days or weeks after the fact. This intervention aims to normalise the employee's experiences and prepare them for symptoms that may occur in the aftermath of an incident, to minimise distress and expedite recovery. Following a traumatic event, support is offered as soon as it is clinically appropriate to address the situation and avoid retraumatisation.

- The first step is to consult one of our CIRS coordinators. You can request a consultation in one of the two ways outlined below:
  - **(Preferred)** Submit a request via our [web portal](#) 24 hours a day/7 days a week.
  - Reach out 24 hours a day/7 days a week to your dedicated EAP phone number. Indicate that you need to access Critical Incident Response Services. If a CIRS Coordinator is not immediately available, the representative will gather initial details about the incident and your contact information, which will be forwarded to a trained CIRS Coordinator.
  - Access your EAP number and additional resources located at:
    - [Livewell](#) (International)
    - [Liveandworkwell](#) (US) portal
- A Coordinator will acknowledge receipt of the request by calling or emailing the requester:
  - US – Within 1 hour
  - International – Within 2–4 hours

## Consultation with a CIRS Coordinator

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Our International CIRS team is comprised of mental health clinicians and other trained specialists who use their expertise to:

- Understand the unique needs of your organisation. This may include the details of the incident and current emotional reactions that you are observing. Such information is necessary to help the CIRS Coordinator fully assess the situation and make appropriate recommendations.
- Provide recommendations regarding the best services for your organisation. The coordinator will discuss the types of services available and make recommendations regarding which services may be beneficial, when services should occur and how many hours to use for maximum effectiveness. The coordinator can also provide guidance on how to announce the services and explain them to those impacted.
- The coordinator will identify a clinician who specialises in Critical Incident Response and will schedule the service. Providers approved to provide Critical Incident response on behalf of Optum must have a comprehensive understanding of how traumatic events affect people. Given the corporate nature of EAP services, this knowledge must include substantive understanding of how exposure to a traumatic event can affect the worker and the workplace, as well as when the experience is a workplace or work-related event.

## Group Debrief

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- Led by a responder who is a mental health clinician with critical incident group debrief expertise
- Typically one hour in length, and always voluntary for employees
- Can be in person, virtual or a combination
- Normalises common reactions to abnormal stressors; provides psychoeducation regarding stress management and coping skills; establishes a sense of order, recovery and next steps
- Both **Educational groups** that are more psychoeducation based (informal discussion; no visual presentation used) and **Interactive Groups** that involve more discussion are available
  - Educational groups are most appropriate for those who were not directly impacted by the incident; more psychoeducational and less conversational; designed for larger audiences to provide information around coping and building resilience
  - Interactive groups are usually for those who were most closely impacted by an event: small groups, usually of 12 or fewer employees
  - Interactive and educational groups are not group therapy, a support group or an in-depth discussion of the incident

## Individual Resilience Planning Consultations (One-to-ones)

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- 15-minute individual consultations to develop a personalised resilience plan
- Attending a one-to-one is always voluntary
- Can occur following group services
- US only: Can be in-person, virtual or a combination
  - If you decide to offer one-to-ones virtually, we offer a scheduling tool. A link will be provided where individuals can sign up for a 15-minute resilience planning session. Their name and email address would not be stored or used for anything other than notifying the responder and the employee of the appointment. Although the fields are required, the employee could enter 'anonymous' as the name. Once a time slot is booked, it would show as unavailable but would not show who booked it.

## Management Consultations

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- 15-minute individual consultation with a manager to:
  - Provide emotional support for managers
  - Provide psychoeducation to help the manager lead their team, such as: typical reactions to the event; reasonable expectations for performance; strategies to facilitate recovery
  - Access to a wide variety of tools and resources

## Turnaround Time for Scheduled Services

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Our standard turnaround time to have a CIRS responder available is 24–48 hours after you have spoken to a CIRS coordinator.

Same-day services can be requested, and we make every effort to accommodate these requests. We cannot guarantee fulfilment of same-day requests, because there may be factors present that impact a responder's ability to safely arrive or be on site (as in the case of natural disasters or pandemics).

## Prior to your Event

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The coordinator will send you an email with confirmation that your response has been scheduled as well as the details of the response.

The assigned CIRS responder will call your site contact to discuss the plan of action. It is very important that the on-site contact and the responder connect prior to the event.

## After the Services

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A survey will be sent via email to the on-site contact to give your organisation the opportunity to share feedback regarding how well the CIRS services met the needs of your organisation.

## Planning Tips

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### Multiple sites for your CIRS?

- We suggest one point of contact to work with us to coordinate the specific dates/times/locations and types of services. We can assist the contact by asking questions and providing best practice suggestions for how to structure these services.
  - The centralised contact should provide us with individual site contacts so that the responder can speak to that person prior to coming on-site or conducting services virtually.

Consider if virtual, in-person or a combination of virtual and in-person responses would best meet the needs of your organisation.

- Virtual responses allow for more flexibility so that employees may join outside their working hours (if it is more convenient) and also allow them the opportunity to interact with employees at other locations.  Virtual events may take place either via our platform (Zoom) or your company's platform. Use of our platform is preferred, as the responders are trained in its use.
- If you would like on-site response: Consider how many locations you have and the number of staff at each location; identify a confidential space to hold the debrief and to adhere to accepted recommendations regarding COVID precautions.
- It's best not to mix management/HR in the same group as staff. The power differential can negatively impact the staff's willingness to be open and receive help. Separate groups can be planned for impacted staff and impacted management/HR, if needed.