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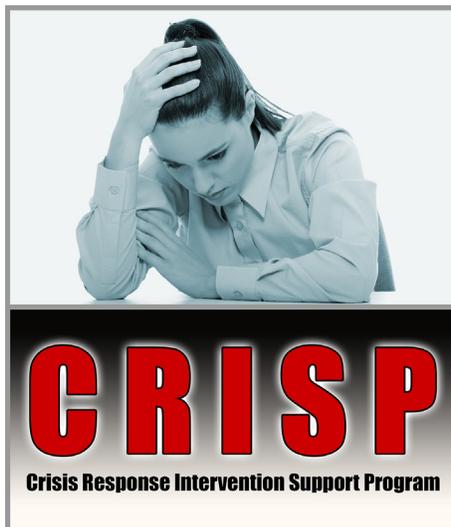
Feature

CRISP streamlined to help TDCJ employees

TDCJ has extensive training programs and detailed workplace procedures in place to help prevent accidents and violent incidents. While prevention efforts have proven effective, traumatic events do occur in prison and can lead to serious stress-related problems for employees. When this happens, TDCJ's Crisis Response Intervention Support Program is there to help.

Established in 2008, the CRISP model was an improvement on the agency's then 12-year-old Post-Trauma Staff Support Program. The CRISP program offers immediate support to agency employees affected by a traumatic event in the workplace. Dealing with emotional reactions immediately after a stressful or violent incident helps reduce the likelihood of post-traumatic problems and, when a staff member suffers a work-related trauma, CRISP team members are among the first to help. Over time, they can help identify the potential need for expert mental health help and prevent long-term emotional problems. CRISP members provide critical support, bridging the gap between the incident and professional therapeutic treatment.

Currently, there are 72 TDCJ employees who serve as CRISP team leaders. These leaders serve throughout the agency's divisions and



have passed Correctional Training and Staff Development's 40-hour Training for Trainers course, as well as the 16-hour CRISP training program. Since January 2014, these team leaders have trained more than 1,000 new CRISP members.

CRISP is designed to mirror TDCJ's administrative structure. The Correctional Institutions and Parole divisions, for example, have CRISP division leaders, along with regional team leaders who manage the team members in their respective areas. Each secure facility also has a team leader and team members, with the number of team members based on the size of the unit.

In 2014, the CRISP model was streamlined for efficiency. Deputy Director of Management Operations for the Correctional Institutions Division Cody Ginsel explained the reason for the change, saying, "The agency's crisis response procedures had, over many years, become cumbersome. A lot of documentation had to be completed in order for an employee to become a CRISP team member, and there was a lot of reporting documentation involved after any event. We felt a change in procedures would allow us to provide critical support more quickly."

The Victim Services Division worked directly with CTSD to improve the CRISP plan and VSD Director Angie McCown explained how agency staff worked to improve an already effective program, saying, "With the support of executive management and the help of longtime CRISP coordinators Marvin Dunbar and Kevin Campbell, we were able to create a train-the-trainer curriculum to ensure that staff willing to serve in a peer support role had the tools and skills needed to do so compassionately and with confidence. I am grateful that TDCJ executive management recognizes the importance of peer support, and that TDCJ staff members are willing to serve their co-workers in need."

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Ginsel listed additional improvements to the program, saying, “We reduced the amount of required documentation and streamlined the training process to make it easier for both users and CRISP team members to participate in the programs. Working together, Victim Services and CTSD built a more efficient crisis response program with improved training content.”

Ginsel noted one unanticipated yet significant benefit of the improved CRISP train-

ing, saying, “The program wasn’t originally designed to provide support for non-work-related issues, but we’ve learned that it’s important for us to help some employees dealing with stress in their personal lives. Employees suffer when tragic events occur in their community, or they might be dealing with personal issues. CRISP team members are trained to recognize serious emotional problems and they know how to respond appropriately. They can help employees deal

with emotional problems, whether they are work-related or not.”

If you would like to learn more about CRISP or are interested in becoming a CRISP team member, contact your warden, supervisor or Human Resources representative; they can put you in touch with your CRISP team leader. CRISP team leaders are also listed in emergency contact lists and the CRISP section of your office bulletin board. ●