

Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program

You're not alone.

If your workplace has experienced a critical incident and you would like support or information about our service, please page.

Pager: 1-888-922-3700

Hours: 9am to 11pm

7 days a week

Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program

The WorkSafeBC Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program is an early intervention/prevention initiative that provides critical incident intervention to workers and employers who have experienced a traumatic event in the workplace. The goal is to reduce the distress experienced by these workers and employers immediately following an event, and to prevent the development of further, more serious difficulties.

What is a workplace critical incident?

A workplace critical incident is any traumatic workplace situation or event that causes an individual to experience unusually strong emotional reactions, which have the potential to interfere with his or her ability to function. Such events are markedly distressing and usually involve a perceived threat to one's physical integrity or the physical integrity of someone in close proximity. Examples of a critical incident are a fatality, physical injury/assault, or armed robbery.

Generally, a Critical Incident Intervention (CII) is arranged for all workers and employers who have witnessed, been directly involved in, or been affected by the event. Critical Incident Interventions are offered to groups as well as individuals. Services can be provided up to three weeks from the date of the critical incident.

Who can request a CII?

Anyone can initiate the request for an intervention. The goal is that when an incident occurs, the CIR Program will be notified as soon as possible to give the CIR Program, the employer, and/or worker, the opportunity to determine whether a CII is appropriate and/or necessary. The purpose of this document is to alert the stakeholders, such as employers, workers, and agencies to our program and offer our services.

The role of the CIR provider

When a CII is initiated through this program, service will be offered by a qualified provider located in the employer's/worker's community. Providers are registered counsellors, social workers, and psychologists who specialize in the field of critical incident stress. If a local provider is not available, a qualified provider will be brought in from an outlying area.

The role of the CIR provider is to offer critical incident intervention or stress management services to employers and workers following a traumatic event in the workplace. Although exceptions may occur, the CIR provider is being contracted to provide a critical incident intervention, which is separate from the possible, more extended treatment which may be necessary for some individuals.

The CIR program may support a brief course of follow-up trauma intervention for individuals identified as needing further support following the initial intervention. The focus of this brief intervention (a maximum of five hours) is to give the individual the opportunity to further address his/her emotional distress resulting from the traumatic event.

What is an intervention?

Typically, there are two main types of interventions: **defusing** and **debriefing**.

The CIR Program provides debriefing.

Defusing

A defusing session is a short (30–45 minute), anonymous, non-judgemental meeting of one or more individuals affected by the incident. Defusings are usually held within six to eight hours of the event. Physical, emotional, and mental reactions that a person may experience are discussed. The provider also explains how clients can take care of their emotional and physical health, and outlines the resources available to those who require more assistance. It is also a good time to assess the need for a debriefing session.

It is essential that only experienced people who are specially trained conduct a defusing. The leader of a defusing may be a peer support person*, professional support people on a CIS (critical incident stress) team (i.e., through emergency services), or a qualified service provider.

Debriefing

You may have heard of or used the term “Critical Incident Stress Debriefing” (CISD), which is an individual or group process in which one or more providers help the affected individuals to cope with the continuing effects of a traumatic incident. A CISD ideally occurs within 24 to 72 hours of the event. Participation is voluntary. The purpose of the debriefing is to alleviate the trauma of affected workers and speed up their recovery. Debriefing focuses on the well-being of the workers; it does not attempt to find the cause of the accident/incident or assign blame.

The CIR provider explains to participants that the focus and intent of the debriefing is to address and respond to the emotional and psychological consequences resulting specifically from the workplace incident. For example, a discussion about non-incident related emotional issues, or labour relations issues, is not appropriate. Debriefings should be led by trained, qualified professionals who can guide the strong emotions such as guilt, sadness, or anger that workers may be experiencing.

To ensure that each situation is attended to in the most appropriate way, we ask our providers to first assess the needs and then proceed with the appropriate intervention. The provider will submit a brief intervention summary report upon completion. This report will not include the names of the participants as this is an anonymous process.

What if the individual needs further assistance?

If the provider identifies any individuals as needing assistance following the initial assessment and intervention, he or she will notify the CIR Program, at which time a maximum of five hours of follow-up intervention with the CIR provider can be authorized. The cost of these additional five hours will be covered under the auspices of the CIR Program, except in the instance where a WorkSafeBC claim has been filed and accepted. In that case, the follow-up intervention will be considered part of the overall treatment of the individual and will be billed to the accepted claim (the cost of the initial intervention would be covered through the CIR program). With the individual’s signed consent, the provider will submit a brief individual progress report. For most individuals, this brief course of early intervention is all that is necessary. For others, psychological treatment may be required. If an individual requires treatment beyond this early intervention, the costs are not covered by this program. The individual may request assistance by applying for a WorkSafeBC claim or find alternate coverage of costs.

**Peer support persons are workers who have been trained to offer support to fellow workers in crisis. For information about peer support programs and how it could be implemented in your workplace, please contact Amber Sawkins, Family & Critical Response Specialist at 604 231-8344 or 1 888 621-7233, local 8344.*

What if a worker registers a claim following a CII?

One of the goals of the program is to link workers who have been involved in a CII to the claims process as smoothly as possible. Should an individual register a claim directly following a CII, a memo will be sent to the WorkSafeBC case manager as soon as the claim is established, informing him/her of the intervention to date. The progress report will also be sent to the claim file.

Who funds this program?

The CIR Program is a WorkSafeBC initiative and, as such, is funded entirely through WorkSafeBC. There is no additional cost to the employer. It is the only critical incident response program within a workers' compensation system in Canada.

Contacts

Soni Thindal is currently coordinating the CIR Program and can be paged at **1 888 922-3700**. The program is available from 9:00 am to 11:00 pm, seven days a week. Calls after 11:00 pm will be returned by 9:00 am the following day.

If you have questions or comments, please contact one of the Family & Critical Response Specialists:

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