

Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program

The WorkSafeBC Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program is a confidential, early intervention 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 that workers and employers may experience immediately following an event, and to mitigate the development of further, more serious difficulties.

What is a workplace critical incident?

A workplace critical incident is a sudden and unexpected workplace situation or event that causes a person to experience unusually strong emotional reactions that 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 can include witnessing or responding to a fatal accident, sustaining a serious physical injury, being assaulted, or being robbed by someone with a weapon.

Generally, an intervention is arranged for workers and employers who have witnessed, or been directly involved in an event. Interventions are offered to groups as well as to individuals. Through the CIR Program, an initial intervention can be accessed up to three weeks from the date of the critical incident.

Who can request an intervention?

Anyone can initiate the request for an intervention. When an incident occurs, please contact the CIR Program as soon as possible to give the program, the employer, and/or worker, the opportunity to determine whether an intervention is appropriate and/or necessary.

Who provides the intervention?

When the CIR Program receives a request for intervention, these services are provided by a qualified mental health professional located in the employer's or worker's community. Providers are registered counsellors, social workers, and psychologists who have specialized training to work with people who have

been through traumatic incidents. If a local provider is not available, a qualified provider can be brought in from another area.

The role of the CIR provider is to offer critical incident intervention to employers and workers following a traumatic event in the workplace. Although exceptions may occur, the CIR provider is contracted to provide short-term support in the form of a critical incident intervention, which is separate from the more extended treatment that may be necessary for some individuals.

What is an intervention?

A critical incident intervention is a structured individual or group process in which a provider helps the affected worker(s) to cope with the continuing effects of a traumatic incident. This kind of intervention ideally occurs within 24 to 72 hours of the event, but can be accessed up to three weeks after the incident. Participation is always voluntary. The purpose of the intervention is to focus on the well-being of the worker(s), not to find the cause of the incident or to assign blame. Discussions about non-incident related emotional issues or labour relations concerns would not be part of the intervention. 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.

During an intervention, the CIR provider explains the intent of the intervention and provides education around why participants may be experiencing strong reactions. Interventions are led by trained, qualified professionals who can address any strong emotions —

such as guilt, sadness, fear, or anger — that workers may be experiencing. If a workplace has an internal peer support program,¹ our trained providers can work with the peers to facilitate the intervention and provide support.

After the intervention, the provider will submit a brief intervention summary report to the CIR Program. If the initial intervention is done as a group, then this report will not include the names of the participants. If the initial intervention is done with an individual, then the report will contain the participant's first and last name or initials. Reports for individual interventions will be forwarded to the appropriate WorkSafeBC claim file, if one has been started. The costs associated with this initial intervention are covered through the CIR Program.

What if the worker needs further assistance?

Following the initial intervention, if the provider finds that a worker who was directly involved in the incident may benefit from further assistance, the provider will notify the CIR Program. At that time, a maximum of five hours of individual follow-up intervention with a CIR provider can be authorized. The cost of these additional five hours will be covered through the CIR Program, except in the instance where a WorkSafeBC claim has been filed and accepted for psychological injury. In that case, the follow-up intervention will be

considered part of the overall treatment of the worker and will be billed to the accepted claim. With the worker's signed consent, the provider will submit an individual progress report, which will be forwarded to the claim file, if one exists.

For most workers, this brief course of early intervention is all that's necessary. For others, psychological treatment may be required. If a worker requires treatment beyond the follow-up support available through the CIR Program, the costs are not covered by the CIR Program. The worker may request further assistance by applying for a WorkSafeBC claim or finding alternate coverage of costs.

What if the worker registers a claim following an intervention?

Should a worker register a claim directly following an intervention, the CIR Program will notify the claim of any involvement to date and forward individual reports to the claim file.

Contact

If you have any questions, or need to request an intervention, please call our toll-free answering service in B.C. and Alberta at 1.888.922.3700. We will return your call between 9 a.m. and 11 p.m., seven days a week. Calls made after 11 p.m. will be returned after 9 a.m. the next morning.

Confidentiality

All information shared with the CIR Program and any CIR staff members and any services provided through CIR are confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the CIR Program except in the following circumstances:

- someone is considering harming him or herself or someone else
- a child under the age of 19 is at risk of harm or is being harmed
- a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected
- a WorkSafeBC claim is commenced by the person utilizing the CIR program
- a court order requires the release of the information, or
- a regulatory college or professional association requires the release of the information for an investigation

¹ A peer-support person is someone who has been trained to offer support to colleagues in crisis. For general information about peer support programs, please contact Incident Response Programs at 604.279.7520