

Goal: To provide information on support and resources available to supervisors and managers who are involved in managing a critical incident.

Objectives:

1. Communicate the university's process for effectively managing critical incidents.
2. Acknowledge the incident and demonstrate how members of the campus community are supported by the university.

Context: A critical incident is a traumatic event that is sudden, unexpected, and outside of the norm of daily experience. Such incidents typically evoke strong emotional, physical and behavioural responses. Examples of critical incidents include a suicide or accidental death, an act of violence, or a serious accident. The physical, mental and emotional effects that go along with these types of events are known as a critical incident stress response. While this is a normal reaction, experienced by normal people to abnormal events, it can worsen if not addressed.

Critical incident management helps work groups [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) acknowledge and manage the stress reaction that arises from a critical incident. Services are available through the EFAP at no cost, and benefit those involved by:

- normalizing their experience;
- encouraging group cohesion and social support;
- encouraging use of constructive methods for dealing with acute stress;
- decreasing the likelihood that participants will use destructive means to cope with stress; and
- providing encouragement to those who require additional support to access individualized services.

There are two types of crisis intervention offered: debriefing and defusing.

- **Debriefing** should be arranged within 24-72 hours of the incident, once individuals have had the opportunity to adjust to the experience. This is the most commonly used intervention. The group and one-on-one sessions offered provide individuals involved an opportunity to discuss the situation, as well as their feelings, and learn about further services and supports available to assist them.
- **Defusing** provides an immediate, onsite response to trauma and is intended to be therapeutic and preventative. It is recommended in situations where the immediate emotional response the individual is experiencing to the event is so great there is concern that unrealistic fear or panic may set in. In most cases, though, debriefing rather than defusing is the more appropriate response.

Key Points:

1. The supervisor/manager should contact the Human Resource Services' [EFAP Administrator](#) to make arrangements for critical incident debriefing as soon as possible—no later than 72 hours after the incident. You will be asked for the information outlined below when you call:
 - Specific nature and time of the incident, number and relationship of staff members or students involved, location of the affected group or team, and observations regarding how they are doing
 - Contact information for someone who can be easily reached to coordinate the response
 - Scheduling considerations
2. Following the incident, it is important to support those involved by acknowledging their feelings, expressing concern for their well-being, offering suggestions and encouraging them to access individualized services through the EFAP as required. The supervisor/manager plays a critical role in providing this support.
3. If the incident occurs outside of normal business hours, and an immediate onsite response is required due to the severity of the situation, the senior administrator involved should contact the EFAP directly at 780-428-7587 to arrange for a psychologist to be dispatched to the worksite. Where this request is made, the senior administrator involved should also email the [EFAP Administrator](#) and the [Human Resources Partner](#) for their faculty/department.